



Muñoz, Theresa Lynda (2015) Alienation in the work of Tom Leonard.  
PhD thesis.

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/7028/>

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

**Alienation in the Work of Tom Leonard**

**Theresa Muñoz**

**B.F.A., MLitt**

Submitted in fulfilment of requirement for the degree of PhD

College of Arts

Department of Scottish Literature

University of Glasgow 2015

## Abstract

This thesis is a chronological study of Tom Leonard's body of work from the years 1965-2009. In a span of forty-four years, Leonard produced three full poetry collections, a book of essays, an anthology of Renfrewshire writers and a biography of poet James Thomson. Though Leonard's work contains a range of narrative styles and genres, notably his pioneering work in urban phonetic dialect in the 1960s, a singular objective binds his varied oeuvre: the exploration of a fictive alienated persona. Through applying definitions of alienation from a sociological and existential perspective, this thesis provides an aesthetic framework for reading Leonard's work holistically. It charts the various methods by which Leonard's poems and prose create a marginalised identity; initially in the areas of religion, class and language and later in the presentation of individuals who suffer from self-alienation (a fragmented sense of self) and who express the desire to feel at peace or 'free' in their daily lives within an existential context. Leonard articulates, but does not resolve, the emotional state of individuals who feel alienated from society or within their own minds and bodies. This thesis recognises that alienation does not apply to Leonard within the context of race or gender due to his position as a white, male writer who has been recognised for his work. However, Leonard's poems in urban phonetic dialect which explore language prejudice, his presentation of neglected writers in *Radical Renfrew*, his exploration of mental illness in *nora's place* and in *Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson (B.V.)* illustrate an interest in, and empathy for, those who feel alienated from society, or to borrow his own words, those who exist 'outside the narrative'. Hence, the wider theme of alienation can be seen as the philosophical arc shaping his body of work. As this is the first holistic analysis of Leonard's work, this thesis also aims to provide contextual analysis of Leonard's influential role in the flourishing use of urban phonetic dialect in Scottish literature, and also aims to address gaps in previous critical analyses of Leonard's work. The thesis identifies critical gaps in discussion of Leonard's

work which include an absence of holistic criticism; a general failure to identify Leonard's use of contemporary poetics; a failure to recognize his application of philosophical concepts such as existentialism and humanism to his work, and significantly, the missed opportunity to identify a consistent theme in his work. The five chapters of the thesis correspond to each of Leonard's main books, *Intimate Voices*, *Radical Renfrew*, *Reports From the Present*, *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative*. Each chapter builds on the premise that Leonard's poetry, prose and biography develops, responds to, and presents an alienated voice.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
Author's Declaration	5
Introduction: Alienation in the work of Tom Leonard	7
Chapter One: <i>Intimate Voices: Selected Work 1965 - 1983</i>	48
Chapter Two: <i>Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War</i>	79
Chapter Three: <i>Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson ('B.V.')</i>	105
Chapter Four: <i>Reports From the Present: Selected Work 1982-94</i>	131
Chapter Five: <i>access to the silence: poems and posters 1984-2004 and outside the narrative: poems 1965- 2009</i>	159
Conclusion	198
Bibliography	200

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the support of an Overseas Research Scholarship, Faculty of Arts Scholarship and Crichton Foundation Award which enabled me to complete the thesis.

I would like to thank Professor Alan Riach for his dedicated supervision. I am grateful to Professor Gerard Carruthers for his valuable feedback during the viva and amendments process. And thank you to Professor Ted Cowan and Dr Lizanne Henderson for their continuous support.

I am grateful to Edward Clark of Edinburgh University Press for proofreading this thesis. Also, Bernadette Gallagher of the Mitchell Library and Craig Nelson of the *Scotsman* archive for helping me locate important articles.

Heartfelt gratitude to my parents, Arturo and Helen, and my family in Vancouver. And to Harry, whose love and encouragement gets me through everything.

## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature

Printed Name: Theresa Muñoz

## Introduction: Alienation in the Work of Tom Leonard

### Contextualising Leonard

Tom Leonard inhabits an influential though narrowly thematic critical space in Scottish poetry as a result of his pioneering renderings of urban phonetic dialect and his representations of marginalised figures in his poetry and prose. Throughout his career, Leonard has been associated with various literary groups with which his writing shares political and linguistic aims of using urban phonetic speech as an artistic representation of an under-represented social class. In the 1960s Leonard's *Six Glasgow Poems* (1969)<sup>1</sup> appeared to follow the urban phonetic poetry of Ian Hamilton Finlay and Stephen Mulrine, and, like Edwin Morgan, challenged the prescriptive limits of Hugh MacDiarmid's synthetic and generic brand of Scots, Lallans. This counter-reaction towards Lallans was made by all three poets through the publication of their poems written in urban phonetic dialect, representing the marginalised voices of the Glaswegian working-classes. As a student at Glasgow University in the 1970s, Leonard attended Philip Hobsbaum's intramural creative writing class which included Glasgow writers James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, Liz Lochhead and Agnes Owen, as well as Tom McGrath's informal performing troupe of writers and artists known as 'The Other People'.<sup>2</sup> In 2001, Leonard became even more closely associated with Kelman and Gray when the three writers were appointed joint chair of University of Glasgow's Creative Writing programme in 2001.<sup>3</sup>

Leonard can be seen as an influential figure in Scottish Literature, particularly for his early poetry which presented, through its artistic representation of urban phonetic dialect and the selection of terms appropriate to Glaswegian vernacular, the experiential reality of living in working-class Glasgow. The publication of Leonard's *Six Glasgow Poems* encouraged other poets to express their thoughts and experiences in urban phonetic dialect, and one of the first noted examples was a fellow Glasgow University student

---

<sup>1</sup> Tom Leonard, *Six Glasgow Poems* (Glasgow: Midnight Press, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> See Philip Hobsbaum, 'The Glasgow Group: An Experience of Writing', *Edinburgh Review*, 80-1, (1988) 59-63 and Gavin Selerie, *Tom McGrath Riverside Interviews* (London: Binnacle Press, 1983)

<sup>3</sup> McLean, Jim, 'Literary Giants Create New Alliance: Kelman, Gray & Leonard Form a Dream Team of Creative Writing to Put Scotland on the International Map', *Herald Scotland*, 22 May 2001, p. 3



named Bill Keys. Keys was seen by Philip Hobsbaum as being influenced by Leonard's narrative style, though the only bond between the work of the two poets seemed to be the mutual use of phonetic dialect.<sup>4</sup> The significance of Keys will be investigated more closely later in this introduction. Stronger thematic examples of Leonard's literary influence on other poets, however, can be seen in the work of Alison Flett and William Letford, whose use of urban dialect in their work explores the relationship between language, sound and power and echoes themes in Leonard's collection *Intimate Voices: 1965-1983* (1984).<sup>5</sup> Influence is difficult to prove, but it can be observed that Leonard's use of phonetic dialect as a style which succinctly expressed one's local background through the individual's transcription of their accent became a popular means of expressing one's identity in Scottish literature. This popularity is evidenced by the work of writers such as Irvine Welsh in *Trainspotting* (1993) and Alan Bissett in *Boy Racers* (2002). The writing trend continues to this day with, for example, Nick Brooks' recent novel *Indecent Acts* (2014) where urban phonetic dialect underpins the socio-economic background of the characters.

Within the West of Scotland, the working-class topics of religion, sectarianism, football in Leonard's poetry placed him alongside prose writers who were also tackling the social realities and class issues of contemporary Glasgow, though in short story and novel form rather than poetry. Along with writers Alasdair Gray, Alan Spence, William McIlvanney and Archie Hind, Leonard has been identified by Douglas Gifford as part of a group of male writers in the 1990s whose work contained themes of 'Scottish realism'; specifically a new wave of urbanised literature which strived to let go of the mythic and rural Scotland once explored by writers such as Edwin Muir, Neill Gunn, Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Hugh MacDiarmid. Instead, this 'new Scottish realism' conveyed the reality of living in the West of Scotland and explored attitudes towards masculinity, violence and religion. Gifford terms this movement as a 'new urbanity' which 'by and large is deeply critical of the very Scotland it celebrates'<sup>6</sup> which is suggestive of an angry, gritty and male-centric literary scene. In another article by Gifford entitled 'The Dear Green Place' which will be discussed in the literature review part of this thesis, Gifford groups Leonard with prose writers such as Robin Jenkins, Alan Sharp and Alasdair Gray, whose narrators

---

<sup>4</sup> Philip Hobsbaum, 'Speech Rather than Lallans: West of Scotland Poetry', *Lines Review*, 113 (June 1990), pp. 4-10 (p. 7).

<sup>5</sup> Tom Leonard, *Intimate Voices: 1965-1983* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Gifford, 'At Last – the Real Scottish Literary Renaissance?', *Books in Scotland* (1990), 1-18.

are ‘sensitive protagonists’ suffering from a sense of alienation and low self-confidence. This thesis discusses both Leonard's place in the West of Scotland as a celebrated poet who was often grouped together with prose writers and the tendency of critics to discuss Leonard alongside prose writers. This inclination of critics to discuss the content and theme of Leonard's work, or to see him merely as a part of a greater West of Scotland writers' collective, leads to an unbalanced and incomplete assessment of Leonard's poetry, where consideration of form and visual presentation would enhance understanding of his work. The relative absence of discussion concerning Leonard's poetry as an art form will be discussed in this introductory chapter as well as later in the thesis.

### ***Six Glasgow Poems (1969)***

Leonard is most recognized for his work in the late 1960s when *Six Glasgow Poems* was first published. His experimental poetry using urban phonetic dialect is similar in form and content to the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay and Stephen Mulrine. In ‘Language, Poetry and Nationhood’, J. Derrick McClure discusses thematic connections between the poems of Finlay, Mulrine and Leonard, noting that these poets were part of a ‘new and radical poetic movement’ which sought to integrate urban working-class dialect into the realm of poetry.<sup>7</sup> Though seen by some to be writing in an unacceptable form, Finlay, Mulrine and Leonard's integration of working-class speech and the literary representation of orality was a significant turning point for Scottish poetry in the 1960s and the dawn of a new poetry with artistic representation of speech which included that of the working-classes. These poets located form within the sounds of an urban language and in its phonetic transcription, producing a defamiliarising style of poetry often meant to shock or startle the reader. The critical impact of these poems with their strong visual element and a pronounced social register will be discussed later in the thesis.

These early Glaswegian dialect poets were sometimes viewed as using a ‘corrupt’ language form while opposing the use of Lallans, Hugh MacDiarmid's ‘synthetic Scots’

---

<sup>7</sup> McClure, p. 129.

which bound the vernacular and the archaic.<sup>8</sup> As Margery Palmer McCulloch states: ‘In the 1960s, however, the question of the appropriate language for poetry in Scotland was still a debating point, with emphasis often placed on the importance of writing in Lallans [...]’<sup>9</sup> This ‘importance’ required a unified approach to writing Scottish poetry, with a focus on the creation of Scots words through the transcription of Scottish language. Though MacDiarmid’s brand of Scots had become the accepted model for writing in poetry, young writers especially did not feel represented in MacDiarmid’s modernist Scots revival. Leonard identified several dimensions in MacDiarmid’s stance, including a personal one. In an interview conducted in 2003, he stated:

I enjoy him [MacDiarmid] now, but I didn’t enjoy him then, because they were part of an agenda, and the agenda was literary Scots. The culture was steeped in an amount of snobbishness, and the snobbishness around Lallans was palpable. I think they always felt under attack from the English lobby and from someone like me who wanted to put forward a language specific to the West Coast of Scotland. I knew some Lallans people who would deride my language as ‘slang’ and ‘patter’, so I didn’t feel very sympathetic to them in return. I could see those MacDiarmid poems now in an international context, but at the time I just wasn’t interested in Lallans poetry, because it represented a stance. MacDiarmid was extremely elitist, so I didn’t really see why I should be gracious towards him, because I’m sure he would be totally ungracious towards me.<sup>10</sup>

Leonard’s critical attitude towards what he saw as an elitist and agenda-driven literary Scots is apparent in his first full length collection *Intimate Voices*; first in a hand-drawing of the poem-poster ‘Makar’s Society’ in which Lallan’s prescriptive word-choice methods are scrutinised in a poster poem: ‘Gran’ Meetin’ the Nicht Tae Decide The Spellin’ O’ This Poster’<sup>11</sup> Secondly, in the essay ‘The Locust Tree in Flower’, Leonard criticises MacDiarmid’s inflated view of his historical legacy on Scottish literature as setting the standard for all future literature. Leonard labels Lallans ‘anti-existential in its insistence on

---

<sup>8</sup> Margery Palmer McCulloch, ‘Culture and the City: Poetry, Painting and Music in 1960s Glasgow’ in *The Scottish Sixties: reading, rebellion, revolution?* ed. by Eleanor Bell and Linda Gunn (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp.175-192, (p. 181).

<sup>9</sup> McCulloch, p.181.

<sup>10</sup> Atilla Dósa, ‘Interview with Tom Leonard’, *Scottish Studies Review*, Vol. 5 Issue 2 (Autumn 2004), 69-83

<sup>11</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 53.

the validity of the naming process', a comment which illustrates how Leonard feels that the use of prescriptive grammar is an affront to an individual's sense of identity and freedom.<sup>12</sup>

Leonard names artist Ian Hamilton Finlay and his pioneering work in the development of shape and form in poetry as influential on his own work. Leonard states: 'In Scotland the only poet who has had any bearing on my work has been Ian Hamilton Finlay, obviously in his *Glasgow beasts an a burd* but also as someone to whose work over the years I have returned, with or without direct result, simply to think about the fundamentals of form'.<sup>13</sup> Similarities can be discovered between Ian Hamilton Finlay's pamphlet of urban creatures *Glasgow beasts, an a burd haw an inseks, an aw, a fush* (1961) and *Six Glasgow Poems*, specifically in the politicisation of the oral and its visual appearance on the page and in the presentation of linguistic humour. These similarities signified that a new style of poetry written in Glaswegian dialect was being formed, and that it often focused on the phonetic transcription of working-class language and humour derived from verbal puns. Re-printed three times, *Glasgow beasts* is a union of text and image around the theme of reincarnation, a term which illustrates the Buddhist principle that after death, a soul lives again in a new body. This underlying theme in the pamphlet suggests the embracing, even in a subtle manner, of influences and literary material outside of Scotland. The booklet features dramatic monologues from a variety of urban or zoo creatures and in each poem, the animal states the importance of its particular presence in Glasgow.<sup>14</sup> In *Glasgow beasts*, the animals' use of phonetic rendering allows for a high degree of verbal word play, such as double entendres and puns. Linguistic 'jokes' are common to both Leonard's and Finlay's pamphlets and stress the humorous possibilities of literature in Glaswegian dialect. This use of verbal play is apparent in the zebra's piece, where Finlay makes a joke of striped crosswalks:

an wance  
ah wis a zebra  
heh heh

<sup>12</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Atilla Dósa, 'Interview with Tom Leonard', *Scottish Studies Review*, Vol. 5 Issue 2 (Autumn 2004), 69-83 (p.74).

<sup>14</sup> Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Glasgow beasts, an a burd haw an inseks, an, aw, a fush*, . 5th ed. (London: Fulcrum Press, 1965).

crossing<sup>15</sup>

In Leonard's 'The Good Thief', he also makes use of puns, this time on the word 'insane': 'ma right insane yirra pape / ma right insane yirwanny us jimmy'.<sup>16</sup> Leonard employs the word 'insane' to phonetically depict the phrase 'in saying', perhaps suggesting that the sectarian conflict between rivaling footballs teams Celtic FC and Ranger can be considered insane; or that the responsibilities of being a Catholic within modern society can be termed as 'insane'. Leonard may also have been inspired by Hamilton Finlay's insertion of phatic communion or oral tics such as 'heh' and 'yeh', short grunts between words which give the poem the pace and inflections of a real-life conversation. In Finlay's poem, the indentation of 'heh' and 'yeh' to the right signals a pause prior to its recitation. Furthermore, the space between 'gaed slinkin' and 'heh' indicates that the speaker takes a breath between lines, allowing the poem to take on the realistic pace of a vocal utterance:

ah wis a fox  
an wis ah sleekit! ah  
gaed slinkin  
                heh  
an snappin  
                yeh  
the blokes  
aa sayed ah wis a GREAT fox<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, in Leonard's 'The Good Thief', the use of 'heh', functions as vocal 'poke' from the Good Thief to Christ, in order to get his attention:

heh jimmy  
 yawright ih  
 stull wayiz urryl  
 ih  
 hey jimmy<sup>18</sup>

More on the function of oral tics in poetry as representations of speech in Leonard's poems will be discussed later in this thesis. However, it can be argued that Finlay's *Glasgow*

<sup>15</sup> Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Glasgow beasts, an a burd haw an inseks, an aw, a fush*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Fulcrum Press, 1965), p.5.

<sup>16</sup> Leonard, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Hamilton Finlay, p. 13).

<sup>18</sup> Leonard, p. 9.

*beasts an a burd* provided Leonard with a template of Glaswegian dialect in poetry which playfully uses language and form to make a statement about language prejudice and that similar use of puns and signposts of verbal utterance between the poems illustrate the forming of new patterns in urban phonetic dialect poetry.

Another example of the influential use of urban phonetic dialect within Scottish poetry is Stephen Mulrine's poem 'The Coming of Wee Malkies' (1967).<sup>19</sup> Here urban mischief and street violence are elevated as artistic subject matter in poetry. Upon publication, Mulrine's poem was seen as innovatory in both visual expression and content. Duncan Glen commented: 'A most interesting development is to be seen in the Glasgow dialect poems of Stephen Mulrine which are as excellent as they are unexpected in such a language'.<sup>20</sup> Glenn is referring to the publication of 'The Coming of the Wee Malkies' which was included in 'Poems by Four Glasgow University Poets, 1967'. 'The Coming of the Wee Malkies' and *Six Glasgow Poems* both contain confrontational identities and Glasgow voices. The poem's opening phrase 'Whit'll ye dae when the wee Malkies come?' and Leonard's line 'get tay fuck ootma road' in the poem 'Good Style' both adopt a threatening tone, which can be termed as a strategy to convey issues of Glasgow violence. Furthermore, there are Glasgow-specific, localised words in Mulrine's poem which narrow the reference base, such as 'wash-hoose dyke' and 'keepie-up'. Similarly, in *Six Glasgow Poems*, Leonard also makes numerous local Glasgow references and composes an entire poem about Scott Symon, a past manager of Rangers Football Club.<sup>21</sup> Mulrine's description of children's street antics also echoes in Leonard's poem 'A Scream' which features two girls who outwit the bus conductor and end up not paying their fares.<sup>22</sup> Working-class referents are common to the work of both poets, as both subvert the idea that such content, and the language used to explore it, was inappropriate as an artistic medium.

The poetic styles of Tom Leonard and Edwin Morgan differ in their presentation of Glasgow voice. Though Morgan also portrays working-class males in poems like 'Good Friday', Patrick Reilly viewed Leonard as the superior exponent of Glasgow voice and

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Mulrine, 'The Coming of wee Malkies' in *The Akros Anthology of Scottish Poetry*, ed. by Duncan Glen, 1-89 (p.74)

<sup>20</sup> Duncan Glen, *The Akros Anthology of Scottish Poetry 1965-1970*, ed. by Duncan Glen, (Preston, Lancashire: Akros Publications, 1970), p.74.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 12.

stated: 'Working class life is interwoven with religion and its Glasgow associate football, in a language so precise that it makes every other attempt at capturing Glasgow speech seem inadequate. Even Edwin Morgan is less gifted [than Leonard] in this respect, for, good as "Good Friday" is, it falters beside "The Good Thief"'.<sup>23</sup> However, the two poets are united in their mutual resistance to Lallans; the establishment of their narrative poetry base in their home city of Glasgow; and the sharing of the common period of the 1960s when, as young poets, they came to prominence. As McCulloch argues: 'Morgan was a radical and transforming figure in Scottish poetry in the second half of the twentieth century: experiments with voices and forms, stretching the resources of Scottish poetry by his translation into Scots of a modern European poet such as the Russian Mayakovksy [...]'<sup>24</sup> Morgan was an emerging figure in the 1960s who shared Leonard's desire to stretch the prescriptive limits of Scottish literature by experimenting with concrete poetry and translations; presenting the city of Glasgow in an contemporary and urbanised light; and acknowledging twentieth-century American literary influences in the culture of Scotland.

Morgan's poem 'To Hugh MacDiarmid' shares Leonard's frustration with Lallans and its promotion as the ideal method of composition for future Scottish poets. Written as a poem/letter, Morgan accuses MacDiarmid of imposing a domineering and homogenised poetic style unsuitable for a younger generation. The poem uses the metaphor of 'rain' to explore the idea that MacDiarmid reduces, or confuses, the art of young poets with his insistence on universal spelling in Scots: 'Names rain things up. You took that hazard of naming'.<sup>25</sup> Morgan's belief that Lallans is a narrow creation which limits Scottish literature is invoked in the last lines, especially with the words 'small country', as a reference to Scotland: 'That's what you know, where it comes from, turning a page or writing one / in your clear hand still, sitting in your small country'.<sup>26</sup> The poem's sentiment is highlighted by its placement in the collection as Morgan's tribute to Ian Hamilton Finlay is on the opposite page. Presented side-by-side, the two poems polarise attitudes towards poetic construction and delivery. Like Leonard, Morgan praises Finlay's ability to construct a physical relationship to the contemporary world: 'You give the pleasure/ of made things/

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Reilly, 'Catholics and Scottish Literature' in *Innes Review*, Vol. 29, Issue 2 (Autumn 1978), pp.183-203 (p. 188).

<sup>24</sup> McCulloch, p. 177.

<sup>25</sup> Edwin Morgan, *The Second Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Morgan, *The Second Life*, p. 16.

the construction holds/ like a net, or it/ unfolds in waves/ a certain measure/ or affection.’<sup>27</sup> Morgan explained his attitude to MacDiarmid in a letter written in the 1990s: ‘MacDiarmid was always criticised for this or that, but I think there was a general knowledge that he had made a real breakthrough in the 1920s, and things were never going to slip back again. On the other hand, when it came to the 1960s, he was himself obstructive to the new wave of writers [...]’<sup>28</sup> As members of that ‘new wave’ Morgan and Leonard were poets who differed stylistically, but they both sought to explore an urbanised Glasgow while focussing on issues of gender, masculinity and sexuality.

## Working Class Culture

Tom Leonard’s legacy as a writer devoted to deconstructing and representing linguistic and political aspects of working-class culture begins with the circumstances surrounding his composition of *Six Glasgow Poems*. Leonard wrote *Six Glasgow Poems* at age twenty-three over the period of a fortnight. The poems were a product of rage: ‘I was absolutely sick to death of what I took to be kind of cuddly toy representations of Glasgow speech on the page.’<sup>29</sup> When asked in an interview whether he felt that he was representing a group of people, Leonard replied: ‘I didn’t feel like I was being a spokesman for a whole group of people. Well I suppose I did, but I didn’t feel it in any kind of leadership way. I just felt that the voice in my mouth wasn’t being represented. It got to the stage that it was beyond a joke.’<sup>30</sup> This comment appears to illustrate how the author’s sense of alienation propelled him to write the concerns of the working-classes into existence. Leonard’s angry position gave him the impetus to insert oral properties of speech into written work in order to feel ‘represented’ in society.

*Six Glasgow Poems* was a product of Leonard’s years as a university student. His early adulthood began with ‘spells of unemployment’ and ‘short-lived jobs’ until he attended Glasgow University from 1967 to 1969.<sup>31</sup> Leonard studied English and Scottish

---

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, *The Second Life*, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> McGonigal and Coyle, p. 501.

<sup>29</sup> Kasia Boddy and Barry Wood, ‘Tom Leonard Interviewed in Glasgow’, *Edinburgh Review*, 77 (1985), pp. 59-71(p. 68)

<sup>30</sup> Boddy, p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Goring, p. 14.



literature and only passed one exam in those two years before he returned to university in 1971 to read for a degree again.<sup>32</sup> During 1967-1969, Leonard met poets Tom McGrath, Alan Spence, Aonghas MacNeacail and Philip Hobsbaum. Leonard adapted well to the social aspects of university and admitted: 'I spent most of my time drinking and talking with these people. I didn't go to many lectures and I drank most of my money.' Leonard also edited the university magazine, *GUM*, and 'spent most of my time doing that.'<sup>33</sup> As student-editor of *Glasgow University Magazine*, Leonard wrote *Six Glasgow Poems* and eventually inserted his own poems into the magazine. A 'well-known story' describes the printer refusing to publish them, so in retaliation 'Leonard xeroxed them and inserted them himself. Tom McGrath asked to publish them, and they have been in print virtually ever since.'<sup>34</sup> The phrase 'in print virtually ever since' alludes to Leonard's inclusion of *Six Glasgow Poems* in most of his subsequent collections, even ones published thirty years later, including *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative*.

Leonard's distribution of his poems heralds his appearance on the Glasgow literary scene in 1968. His arrival was part of a significant movement in Scottish poetry, what Philip Hobsbaum would describe in 1981 as the 'Second Scottish Revival', following the so-called Scottish renaissance of the early twentieth century.<sup>35</sup> In retrospect, critics felt this latest renaissance was overdue. J. Derrick McClure argues that 'the appearance of a distinctive Glaswegian voice in Scots poetry was surprisingly belated'. McClure notes that it was the 1960s when dialect as a poetic medium took off 'quite suddenly and dramatically, in a new and radical poetic movement.'<sup>36</sup> The concise presentation of working-class issues in *Six Glasgow Poems*, as well as the integration of the oral properties of speech into written text, distinguished Leonard's poetry in Scottish literature and placed him in this 'new and radical movement'.

A series of articles in Scottish-based literary journals lauded the political significance of *Six Glasgow Poems*. Stephen Mulrine, in his discussion of 'The Good Thief' stated that Leonard's devotion to representing Glasgow voices in the same way that poet William Carlos Williams represented the voices of American mid-west, 'guarantees

---

<sup>32</sup> Dosa, p. 72

<sup>33</sup> Dósa, p. 72.

<sup>34</sup> Goring, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Hobsbaum, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> McClure, p. 167.

Tom Leonard's lasting place in twentieth-century Scottish literature'.<sup>37</sup> Edwin Morgan stated that 'In the use of Glasgow dialect in fiction or drama, it is difficult to pick out one name as being central to the development; in poetry, such a name does at once offer itself: Tom Leonard'.<sup>38</sup> Tom McGrath, in his review of Leonard's *Poems, 1973*, begins by stating that *Six Glasgow Poems* is 'the most accurate annotation of Glasgow dialect, humour and personality that has been written'.<sup>39</sup> Duncan Glen, in his essay 'A New Harmony? Younger Scottish Poets Today' comments on Leonard's ability to locate profundity in Glaswegian dialect: 'He often writes in the Glasgow dialect but usually without the limitation of scope that the use of dialect can so often mean. There is nothing backward-looking about Tom Leonard's poems.'<sup>40</sup> Writing in 1978, Patrick Reilly stated that 'Tom Leonard's poetry reproduces the voice of the city [of Glasgow] at its most authentic' and added 'Those who would know Glasgow today should begin with Leonard work.'<sup>41</sup> These accolades, which are similar in tone and detail, confirm Leonard's sudden rise in local literary circles and especially applaud Leonard's ability to form concise representations the working-class, Glaswegian voice.

Philip Hobsbaum addressed Leonard's influence in his article 'Speech Rather than Lallans: West of Scotland Poetry' (1996). He describes the writing group Hobsbaum organised in the 1970s and Leonard's remarkable contribution:

But to that group came a young bookshop assistant called Tom Leonard. After some weeks of hearing the other poets debate the proprieties of vocabulary in Scots verse, Tom Leonard produced a series of pieces called *Six Glasgow Poems*. We all knew at the time that these poems were a break-through.<sup>42</sup>

The 'break-through' was Leonard's ability, shared with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman who were also Hobsbaum group attendees, to find new forms of literary expression through particular sensitivity to known and practised living language. Their use of phonetic dialect created socio-political scenarios and narratives in their writing. Hobsbaum stated

---

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Mulrine, 'The Good Thief', *Akros*, Vol. 17 No. 51 (1983), 54-55 (p.54).

<sup>38</sup> Edwin Morgan, 'Glasgow Speech in Recent Scottish Literature' in *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue: Studies in the Language and Literature of Lowland Scotland*, ed. by J Derrick McClure (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1993), pp. 195-218 (p.204).

<sup>39</sup> Tom McGrath, 'Two-headed Man', *Akros*, Vol. 8 No. 24 (1974), 40-49 (p.40).

<sup>40</sup> Duncan Glen, 'A New Harmony? Younger Scottish Poets Today', *Akros* Vol.9 No. 27 (1975), 51-65 (p. 58).

<sup>41</sup> Reilly, pp.188-189.

<sup>42</sup> Hobsbaum, p. 6.

that they ‘give voice to the inarticulate, the uneducated, the dispossessed.’<sup>43</sup> Yet Hobsbaum’s certainty that ‘We all knew at the time that these poems were a breakthrough’ might be seen as a personal and local judgement relevant only to writers of a similar ilk in Scotland.<sup>44</sup> Critics outside of Scotland did not always acknowledge his poems as a breakthrough, but by the 1970s, Leonard’s work was sparking what Hobsbaum called a ‘genuine revival’. Hobsbaum reprinted a poem published in the *Glasgow University Magazine* in 1971.<sup>45</sup> The poem was written by Bill Keys, a mature student at Strathclyde University and Hobsbaum attributed the poem’s ‘humour, technical control, but, behind it all, a genuine tenderness’ to Leonard, suggesting that Leonard revealed to others how to convey emotion through dialect. The poem features a dialogue between a young boy and his father about a getting a family dog:

#### A Dug A Dug

Hey, daddy, wid yi get us a dug?  
 A big broon alsation? Ur a wee white pug,  
 Ur a skinny wee terrier ur a big fat bull.  
 Aw, daddy, get us a dug. Wull yi?<sup>46</sup>

Keys’ use of traditional rhyme scheme gives the poem a sentimental tone which is not normally present in Leonard’s work. But like Leonard’s poetry, a comic element arrives in the form of the young narrator’s observations, specifically the contrasts of different kinds of dogs’ colour and shape ‘big broon alsation / wee white pug’ and ‘skinny wee terrier / big fat bull.’ This is a rather obscure example of Leonard’s influence as proffered by Hobsbaum, and the connection between the two poems is far from exact. Keys’ poem lacks the cutting anger of Leonard’s early work and the connection between the two is only through the presentation of a working-class voice.

It can be argued that Leonard’s more serious ‘successors’ in contemporary poetry are poets who employ urban phonetic dialect in poetry as a means of conveying the grittier reality of working-class life. However, poets who represent the working-classes have not been in abundance. Donny O’Rourke’s *Dream State: The New Scottish Poets* (1994) showcases poets born in the 1950’s and 1960’s, some of whom write in Scots or Gaelic,

---

<sup>43</sup> Hobsbaum, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Hobsbaum, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Hobsbaum, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Hobsbaum, pp. 7-8.

including Kathleen Jamie, Meg Bateman and Roddy Gorman.<sup>47</sup> In recent years, ne poet who writes consistently about working-class themes is Alison Flett. Flett subverts traditional notions of femininity in Scottish literature by using an aggressive style customarily associated with male narrators. Born in Edinburgh but re-located to Orkney, Flett's poems in her debut work *Whit Lassy Ur Inty* (2004)<sup>48</sup> shows parallels in style and structure to Leonard's *Intimate Voices*. The poems in both collections contain brisk, short lines, lower-case lettering, appear centred on the page and feature short, rolling monologues uttered by a single narrator. The syntax and spelling of particular words are also comparable; both narrators refer to themselves as 'ah', and use other phonetic renderings such as 'yi' and 'whit'. These visual and oral similarities indicate the influence of Leonard, but creating words and phrases in phonetic dialect though the female voice is not common in Leonard's corpus, aside from the poems 'A Scream' and the sequence *nora's place*.<sup>49</sup> The relative absence of a female voice in Leonard's work perhaps provided Flett with an incentive to create a female perspective. Flett presents another layer of social prejudice: that of a working-class female who feels undermined by males in her social class. Her poem 'A WIDER PURSPECTIVE' explores the mind of a woman who is being verbally demoralised by a man. With the title in ironic capital letters, indicating the man's limited viewpoint, the female narrator recalls how he bolstered his own self-confidence by destabilising hers:

he sayz  
 thats aw very well  
 he sayz  
 bit yir lookin it thingz  
 fay thi narry pointy viewy  
 an unedjicated  
 povurty strickin  
 wummin  
 where az me  
 he sayz  
 ah see thingz  
 mare cleerly<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Donny O'Rourke, *Dream State: The New Scottish Poets* (Edinburgh, Polygon, 1994)

<sup>48</sup> Alison Flett, *Whit Lassy Ur Inty* (Edinburgh: Thirsty Books, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p.12 & *nora's place* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1990)

<sup>50</sup> Flett, p. 28.

Leonard's poetry also ironically mimics voices of authority in order to highlight power imbalances. A similar undermining tone is seen in the third poem of Leonard's sequence 'Unrelated Incidents':

this is thi  
 six a clock  
 news thi  
 man said n  
 thi reason  
 a talk wia  
 BBC accent  
 iz coz yi  
 widny wahnt  
 mi ti talk  
 aboot thi  
 trooth wia  
 voice lik  
 wanna yoo  
 scruff ...<sup>51</sup>

As with Flett's poem, the speaker questions the narrator's identity. The paradox here is that the voice addresses 'yoo / scruff' as if these were contemptible people, but at the same time the voice itself represents the way in which the so-called 'scruff' might speak. The voice is ostensibly that of a BBC news announcer, someone whose speech is normally clearly articulated in Received Pronunciation English, so the satirical quality of Leonard's poem cuts into the establishment linguistic conventions while validating the language of the alienated 'subjects' of middle-class condescension.

William Letford's poetry collection *Bevel* (2012)<sup>52</sup> also echoes Leonard's use of urban phonetic dialect as a method of conveying the reality of working-class life. Although the bulk of Letford's poems celebrate the paid labour of the working-classes, such as in building or roofing, there are similarities in the artistic presentation of working-class values, especially the place of literature in society. Letford's poem 'Hammers and nails' presents a narrator who has published a poem and feels compelled to tell a fellow co-worker. However, the narrator's lack of payment for his art signifies the low place of poetry in comparison to 'real' work. Humour is injected by Letford's transcription of phonetic 'sounds' as 'eh, naw, aw, right' which act as the poem's resolution as they signify

<sup>51</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 88.

<sup>52</sup> William Letford, *Bevel* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2011).

the narrator's acceptance of the situation. Like Leonard, Letford concentrates on the vocal tics of his narrators by stringing their words together, as a visual representation of their oral speech:

hammers	nails
hammers	nails
hammers	nails
heh Casey did a tell ye a goat a couple a poems published widizthatmean widaayyeman dizthatmeanyetgetmoneyfurrit	
eh	naw
aw	right

Leonard's poetry traces a similar reaction concerning the writing of poetry and also uses humour to convey it, though Leonard gets a physical 'comeuppance' for making his achievements known:

This is Tom Leonard, my friend said to his companion.  
 He writes poetry.

If you think I'm impressed you've got another thing coming.  
 said his companion - and punched me on the jaw.<sup>53</sup>

Similarities between Leonard's work and a younger generation of Scottish poets can be seen in the use of urban phonetic dialect to explore the links between literature, language and culture in a working-class context and both Flett and Letford continue Leonard's exploration of the links between power and language.

### **Glasgow and the West of Scotland**

Leonard inhabits a celebrated literary position in his home city of Glasgow, a fact of which is sometimes occluded by his reluctance to be seen as a member of any group. Leonard's connection to Philip Hobsbaum's 'Glasgow Group' is a site of contention, not least in

---

<sup>53</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 127.

Leonard's own negative responses to the alleged influence of Hobsbaum. Moira Burgess pinpoints Hobsbaum's Glasgow Group as the most easily definable breeding ground for new Glasgow work. In the early 1970s Philip Hobsbaum of Glasgow University held a writers' group in his flat. Writers in this group included Tom Leonard, James Kelman, Liz Lochhead and Alasdair Gray. They met in a tutorial where the main purpose was to provide constructive criticism about each other's work.<sup>54</sup> Since chairing that group, Hobsbaum has said that 'the Glasgow Group, retrospectively, looks like a peak of literary culture.'<sup>55</sup> When Hobsbaum stated this in 1988, it was true that many of the talents had continued to grow since their membership of the group. By 1988, Alasdair Gray had published the dystopian surrealist novel *Lanark* (1981) which won the Scottish Arts Council Award in 1982; James Kelman had published a number of short story collections and the award-winning *Greyhounds for Breakfast* (1987); and Liz Lochhead had established herself as a poet with her collection *Islands* (1978). However, Leonard did not agree with the leadership role that Hobsbaum assigned to himself. In an interview conducted at his office in University Gardens with David Crow, Leonard stated:

I respect Philip in my memory but in terms of the idea of Jim, Alasdair and I going and sitting at the feet of Philip – that's complete nonsense. I went to his group a number of times and it never changed a single syllable of what I wrote.<sup>56</sup>

The mythologisation of the Hobsbaum group as a breeding ground for Glasgow's best writers can be viewed as a convenient label for critics when attempting to gather and brand this particular group of writers. However, this thesis argues that Leonard may have felt more at ease in a less formal writing union featuring some of the same West of Scotland writers, dubbed 'The Other People' and organised by playwright Tom McGrath in the late 1960s. Though less well known than the Hobsbaum group, The Other People reflected the flowing creativity in Scotland at the time, as well as a developing camaraderie amongst certain writers.<sup>57</sup> One of these writers, Alan Spence, recalls: 'I remember thinking Tom (Leonard) said he really liked that title, because it wasn't exclusive, it was about the other people. It was a collective name but it was also expansive.'<sup>58</sup> Leonard may have

---

<sup>54</sup> Moira Burgess, *Imagine a City: Glasgow in Fiction* (Glendaruel: Argyll Publishing, 1998), p. 232.

<sup>55</sup> Philip Hobsbaum, 'The Glasgow Group: An Experience of Writing', *Edinburgh Review*, 70 (1988) pp. 59-63.

<sup>56</sup> David Crow, 'An intimate voice', *Glasgow Guardian*, 21 November 2005, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Gavin Selerie, *Tom McGrath Riverside Interviews* (London: Binnacle Press, 1983), p. 191.

<sup>58</sup> Spence, Interview with Theresa Muñoz, 24 November 2010.

appreciated the name's connotation of being a group of artists who were outside of the mainstream. Glasgow-born McGrath lived on Bank Street, and his kitchen became a meeting place for musicians and artists. Writers such as Leonard, Spence and Alasdair Gray met each other in the friendly confines of his kitchen, the space where McGrath later operated Midnight Press, the small imprint which published Leonard's first two pamphlets, *Six Glasgow Poems* and *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street*.<sup>59</sup> In the interview Leonard does speak of a culturally vigorous West End of Glasgow where young writers held parties, experimented with drugs and discussed their work in the pub.<sup>60</sup>

The growing, if still incomplete, recognition of the influence of The Other People group on Leonard, however, has not prevented him from being firmly associated with Hobsbaum's Glasgow Group. The notion of the group members as a brat-pack of writer-rebels gathered around Philip Hobsbaum in the 1970s grew steadily with their careers. Leonard's professional association with the Glasgow Group peaked when he, James Kelman and Alasdair Gray occupied collectively a Chair of Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow. The post was first offered to James Kelman and then subsequently shared among the three, as reported by Scotland's *Herald* newspaper.<sup>61</sup> The literary circle of Glasgow was pleased with what seemed to be the reunion of the Hobsbaum group. In its initial article, Scotland's *Herald* newspaper stated:

Apart from a friendship forged over the years, Kelman, Gray and Leonard also share a connection with Professor Philip Hobsbaum, who is arguably the ultimate link that brought them together. Now in semi-retirement, Professor Hobsbaum initiated writers workshops at his Glasgow home. In 1966, the professor met a man working in John Smith's bookshop. The writer was Tom Leonard. Then, in 1969, with Alasdair Gray also on the scene, Professor Hobsbaum started creative writing classes in the adult education department at Glasgow University.<sup>62</sup>

The *Herald's* mention of the Hobsbaum myth may simply be illustrative of an urge for journalistic neatness when classifying its nations' writers. However, Leonard's reluctance to be identified with the Hobsbaum group confirms his idea of himself as a marginalised figure, even though his reputation and stature within Scottish literature – broadly –

---

<sup>59</sup> Alan Spence, Interview with Theresa Muñoz, Scottish Poetry Library, 24 November 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Crow, p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Jim McLean, 'New Professors created job share idea', *Herald Scotland*, 23 May 2001, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> McLean, p. 3.



indicates otherwise. This paradox between Leonard's established place in Scottish literature and his tendency to withdraw from the public eye will be discussed later in this thesis.

It can be argued that in the 1970s, one particular writer was closely aligned in both narrative style and agenda. Leonard and James Kelman were seen as radical young writers whose experimentation with urban phonetic dialect conveyed the experiential reality of working class Glasgow. Roderick Watson illustrates the pairs' shared linguistic reaction to the poor representation of Glaswegian dialect in literature: 'Leonard and Kelman have been particularly articulate in their opposition to 'English' and the prevailingly middleclass systems of culture and education which have done so much to silence and or to undervalue the truths and aesthetic merits to be found in the speech rhythms and idioms of every day usage.'<sup>63</sup> Both residents of Glasgow and from the same artistic and cultural context, their commitment to the city can be seen when they, along with Alex Hamilton, produced a pamphlet entitled *Three Glasgow Writers* (1976). Though Kelman had lived previously in London, Manchester and the United States, he illustrated his commitment to Glasgow above all other cities: 'I am always from Glasgow and I speak English always / Always with this Glasgow accent'. Leonard's piece in *Three Glasgow Writers*, later reprinted in *Intimate Voices*, confirms his identity by outlining a particular problem in Glaswegian dialect, specifically the frustrating limits of separating the written and the oral in conversation: 'Course, they never really say "Doon the road" or "Down the Road!" at all. Least, they never say it the way itz spelt. Coz it izny spelt, when they say it, is it?'<sup>64</sup> Friends, fellow-students and colleagues, Leonard and Kelman both have reputations as dissenters with aggressive public personas. Simon Kolvesi points out that when forced to interact with established institutions, Kelman has the tendency to 'approach, but then withdraw, criticising polemically on the way in and on the way out; such was the case with his controversial Booker Prize shortlisting in 1989, and his eventual win in 1994; such was the case with his high-profile Professorship of Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow.'<sup>65</sup> Leonard has his share of similar stories including winning the Saltire Prize in 1984 for *Intimate Voices* which coincided with the book being banned from school

---

<sup>63</sup> Roderick Watson, 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing' in *The Yearbook of English Studies* 25: *Non-standard Englishes and the New Media* (1995), pp. 141-156 (141).

<sup>64</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 73.

<sup>65</sup> Simon Kövesi, *Contemporary British Novelists: James Kelman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 4.

libraries for language that was deemed inappropriate, an event which will be discussed later in the thesis.<sup>66</sup> The ultimately fractious appointment of Leonard, Kelman and Alasdair Gray to a shared Chair of Creative Writing at Glasgow University from 2001-2003 was also wryly assessed by Leonard in the *Glasgow University Guardian* when he said that ‘a three-legged chair cannot stand’<sup>67</sup>, indicating that the appointment was inherently unstable.

In terms of their narrative styles, Kelman and Leonard both utilise the written page as a linguistic space which redefines narrative forms through an integrative approach to ‘voice’. Both writers use urban phonetic dialect, or at least, words belonging to a Glaswegian vernacular, in order to convey the concerns of a specific socio-economic group. Furthermore, both writers also blur boundaries between the narrative and expository elements in poetry and prose. Kelman's prose fiction intertwines both these elements into the text, allowing for what Kovesi calls a ‘free, indirect style’: ‘narrators and protagonists use the same language in terms of spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and syntax, usually merged in free indirect discourse [...]’ As Kovesi explains, there is little difference between the narrator’s voice and the character’s voice due to the double absence of quotation marks and the customary shift between exposition and dialogue. Disjointed and with dialogue and exposition running together, Kelman's re-modelling of traditional prose sentences challenges the reader visually and cognitively, as the reader must distinguish between dialogue, exposition and narration. In other words, the reader must figure out if the words on the page are the characters inner thoughts, are verbal utterances between one character and another, or has the function of explaining plot to the reader.

However, Kelman and Leonard are not completely similar writers; the two diverge in their construction of urban phonetic dialect and of course, in genre. Leonard’s poetry concentrates on the phonetic transcription of the demotic voice in order to reflect the individual textures of Glaswegian speech. In the eighth poem of the ‘Unrelated Incidents’ sequence, Leonard slowly transforms the phrase ‘in the beginning was the word’ into a phonetic expression. This gradual transformation of ‘in the beginning was the word’ to ‘nthibiinningwuzthewurd’ by slowly changing letters and narrowing the space between the individual words illustrates his interest in the oral and sound properties of language.

---

<sup>66</sup> Simon Bain, ‘Region Bans Top Book of Poetry’, *Scotsman*, 16 March 1985, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Bain, p.4.

McCulloch states: ‘Moreover, the drama of the secular happening is communicated through the “music” of the poem: the ebb and flow of the speaking human voice, its urgent questioning contrasted with slower reflection, with pauses between utterance, then with renewed urgency...’<sup>68</sup> Leonard’s poetry does not primarily need to tell a story; rather his poetry captures the narrator’s words and thoughts within a specific situation and moment. But like Kelman, Leonard blurs boundaries, specifically between the expositional and dialoguing aspects of poetry. His poem ‘The Miracle of the Burd And the Fishes’ from *Six Glasgow Poems* starts mid-conversation and gives no explanation of the situation unfolding between the father and son:

ach sun  
jiss keepyir chin up  
dizny day gonabootlika hawf shut knife  
inaw jiss cozzly a burd<sup>69</sup>

This poem, like others in Leonard's oeuvre, startles the reader with its absence of exposition and its appearance as a spontaneous vocal utterance. The effect is one of discomfort to the reader as they discern the characters' roles and relation to one another, as well as deciphering the often unfamiliar urban phonetic dialect. The religious allusion to this poem evident in the title referring to one of Jesus' miracles is another contextual 'layer' of Leonard's work which will be discussed in a later chapter. Though writing in different genres, both Leonard and Kelman find common ground in the subversion of traditional narrative forms and their presentation of a variant of English to represent, as Robert Crawford concedes, ‘the particular linguistic and cultural community’ which they both come from.<sup>70</sup>

While there are significant commonalities between Kelman’s prose and Leonard's poetry, the tendency to compare him to prose writers has sometimes taken the focus off his role as a poet. In 1990, the same year that Hobsbaum saw Leonard playing a significant role in linguistic ‘Scottish Revival’, Douglas Gifford discussed a more general trend in Scottish Literature, that of ‘Scottish New Realism.’<sup>71</sup> Naming writers such as James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, Iain Banks, William McIlvanney, Archie Hind, and Tom Leonard

---

<sup>68</sup> McCulloch, p. 179.

<sup>69</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 13.

<sup>70</sup> Crawford, p. 285.

<sup>71</sup> Douglas Gifford, ‘At Last – the Real Scottish Literary Renaissance?’, *Books in Scotland*, 34 (1990) 1-4.

as part of this trend, Gifford discussed the possibility that the real revival was in Glasgow, which would make Leonard's poems key to this changing period of Scottish writing. As Gifford states:

At times it seemed that Glasgow was the revival, such energy seemed to have been released. It was that Glasgow writing brought the issue of language back to the boil; and it was appropriate that the language forms condemned as debased by the *Scottish National Dictionary* should take their revenge by thrusting rude new shoots through what had become rather unproductive ground.<sup>72</sup>

This movement wanted to shed the tethers of the so-called 'Renaissance pretentiousness' of MacDiarmid and embrace a realistic and even critical view of Scottish life. Such brand of Scottish realism can also be defined by Kirsty Macdonald, though much later: 'In Scotland realism has become associated with a politically motivated effort to tell the "truth" about the harsh realities of urban life, and as a result it has come to index a peculiarly masculine, working-class — and often violent — perspective as a marker of cultural authenticity.'<sup>73</sup> Criticism of traditional masculinity and working-class culture is apparent in Leonard's poetry and other Glasgow authors. One in particular is Archie Hind, whose main character Mat in the novel *The Dear Green Place* dreams of being a novelist, but does not fulfil this dream due to inward insecurities and domestic responsibilities.<sup>74</sup> Mat traces his own lack of self-confidence to his cultural heritage: 'Where did the failure of his work come from? Was it from some other source? Lack of courage? Fear of risk? Was it in the language of the gutter patois into which his tongue fell naturally when he was moved by strong feeling?'<sup>75</sup> These insecurities echo in the defeated protests from another young man in Leonard's poem 'The Qualification'. Brief lines and short syllables characterise the narrator's voice as he considers the significance of an education in a working-class environment:

wurk aw yir life  
nuthnty show  
pit oanthi nyuze  
same awl drivl

---

<sup>72</sup> Gifford, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Kirsty Macdonald, 'Against Realism: Contemporary Scottish Literature and the Supernatural' in *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 328-335 (p. 329).

<sup>74</sup> Archie Hind, *The Dear Green Place*, first published by New Authors Ltd, 1966 (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008).

<sup>75</sup> Hind, p. 244.

...

awright fur him thoa  
 uppit thi yooni  
 tok aw yi like therr  
 thats whit its fur<sup>76</sup>

Though it recognizes Leonard as part of a movement he shared with prose writers that empowered the Glasgow voice, this thesis will put the focus back on Leonard as a poet and investigate the innovative formal techniques he used to express the sense of alienation that he discovered initially in Glasgow's working class community.

### Critical Reception

Investigating Leonard's place in contemporary Scottish Literary criticism reveals an overwhelming focus on his early work in urban phonetic dialect which even recent criticism has done little to change. This section of the introduction provides an analysis of the critical reaction to Leonard's work and argues that critics have not only focused on his later work but have neglected the concepts of alienation and marginalisation which are the keys to understanding his entire corpus. Criticism of Leonard's work is patchy, repetitive and fails to identify a binding theme. As will be discussed throughout this thesis, criticism is often limited to his poetry in phonetic dialect and its relationship to defining Glasgow language, literature and culture. Existing discussions rarely consider 'outside' influences on Leonard's work which include his interest in William Carlos Williams' narrative strategies of conveying sensory experiences and objectivity in language and his use of field, concrete and electronic poetics as explored and practised by Charles Olson and Edwin Morgan. The absence of discussion of Leonard's poetry in the context of form and device may be partially explained by the fact he is rarely discussed outside of Scotland. Hence, there is a considerable amount of critical analysis of Leonard's views on working-class politics and language, but far less about the aesthetic strategies at work in his poetry. This section provides a review of the critical reaction to Leonard's work and identifies four main characteristics: a focus by critics on his poetry in urban dialect; lacklustre

---

<sup>76</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 50.

comparisons to prose writers or other dialect poets; a lack of discussion concerning international influences on Leonard's work; and a critical resistance to discussing Leonard's changing engagements with text and materiality. The result of this focus is that only the early periods of Leonard's work, namely his poems in *Intimate Voices*, have been given substantial critical attention.

The main characteristic of existing criticism is the focus on the politics of Leonard's poetry in phonetic dialect, especially *Six Glasgow Poems*. Christopher Whyte justifies his decision to discuss only *Six Glasgow Poems* in his chapter on 1960s Scottish literature because that particular sequence has, in his opinion, been Leonard's most significant contribution to Scottish literature. As Whyte states:

Though Leonard has continued to write and publish in both English and in Scots, he has not repeated this amazing feat. Nothing from his later work pulls such a punch, compressing an immense power for change in the space of six pages.<sup>77</sup>

Whyte narrowly dismisses the range and effect of Leonard's work post *Six Glasgow Poems* but this thesis will argue that some of Leonard's poems in English are exceptional, albeit often less compressed than *Six Glasgow Poems*. However, Whyte is right to say that no other poetry sequence or single book by Leonard has been given the same amount of critical attention. His comment suggests that the publication and reception of *Six Glasgow Poems* in 1969 is a natural starting point, and sometimes finishing point, for other critics interested in Tom Leonard. Matt McGuire in *Contemporary Scottish Literature* states that: 'From the very first publication, *Six Glasgow Poems*, Leonard could be seen to be taking the language of the street into a whole new era.'<sup>78</sup> Colin Milton illustrates Leonard's innovative form by stating: 'His Glasgow poems make an implicit but powerful claim that, far from decaying and corrupt, Glasgow speech has the vigour and the expressive range to be a suitable medium for the "high" purpose of poetic creation.'<sup>79</sup> These critics praise Leonard's ability to find form in language and his elevation of Glaswegian dialect as a valid medium for poetry. However, these are the only aspects of his work they discuss.

---

<sup>77</sup> Christopher Whyte, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 132.

<sup>78</sup> Matt McGuire, *Contemporary Scottish Literature: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 52.

<sup>79</sup> Colin Milton, 'Ma Language Is Disgraceful: Tom Leonard's Glasgow Dialect Poems' in *Varieties of English around the World, General Series*, 1997), pp. 185-211 (p. 187).

They do not investigate characteristics of his poetry beyond urban dialect, which include a detailed use of imagery, and the integration of field and concrete poetics.

The repeated focus on Leonard's poetry in urban dialect means the full spectrum of his work, notably his range of essays, poster poems, and field and concrete experiments are relatively neglected. Critics have not provided rounded commentary on the breadth of his output as essayist, anthologist and biographer, which should enable him to be seen as a multi-faceted writer who has written in both prose and poetry. Discourse which describes the interconnectedness of his work is badly needed. Only one article attempts to bridge the different main books of Leonard's oeuvre: Ken Cockburn's 'Towards This Particular Place: Tom Leonard's *Places of the Mind* and its Relationship to His Earlier Works' (1994). Cockburn's isolates an obscure narrative pattern in Leonard's work, namely the gradual but rounded construction of a theme or character through the accumulation of minor scenes. These minor scenes can be found in his poetry sequences; for example, in *nora's place*, where the seventeen vignettes describe her moments from her days as a housewife and her relationships with her husband and children, and ultimately construct a character suffering from mental illness. Similarly, in *Places of the Mind*, Leonard adopted a structure where details of Thomson's life, his work *The City of Dreadful Night* coalesce into a picture of man whose struggles with alcohol and depression led him to write the long, bleak poem which explores human guilt and sin. Leonard's complex biographical idea can be seen in his arrangement of the biography into twenty-two chapters, the same number of sections as Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*, as a strategy to structurally link the two texts, the effect of which will be discussed later in this thesis. Cockburn states of Leonard's decision in *Places of the Mind* to create short chapters: 'The effect of this approach is to produce a detail, rounded portrait of Thomson, and of the times he lived in - their intellectual, spiritual, social and political aspects [...] In the succession of detail "the pattern" emerges.'<sup>80</sup> Though Cockburn's connections between Leonard's various texts require deeper analysis, this article at least provides an example of an inclusive and imaginative way that Leonard's diverse texts might be approached.

In critical analysis of Leonard's work there is little discussion of his poetry in Standard English, despite the fact that Leonard's output is almost equally divided between

---

<sup>80</sup> Cockburn, p. 125.





These comments politely summarise the breadth of Leonard's work, but do not cover Leonard's later poems in great detail. The failure to comment on later poems by Leonard is also evidenced in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry* (2009). In the chapter 'Nomadic Subjects in Recent Poetry', Colin Nicholson provides an in-depth discussion of 'Unrelated Incidents', despite the fact that it was first published twenty years previously. Though Nicholson praises Leonard's portrayal of 'power relations contingent on acceptance and refusal based on voice and speech', he neglects Leonard's later experimental forms revealed in *access to the silence*.<sup>83</sup> Assessment of Leonard's work should view *Six Glasgow Poems* as the beginning of a wide-ranging career, rather than its pinnacle. This study devotes two chapters to identifying the existentialist messages and use of contemporary poetics in Leonard's collections *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative* which are mostly in Standard English. It will discuss Leonard's presentation of existentialism through the methodologies of field, concrete and electronic poetics and the application of existential concepts in the poems and pamphlets comprising *access to the silence* and evidence Leonard as both philosopher poet and lifelong experimenter in poetic form. Critics are muted on Leonard's less mainstream forms such as the poster poems. Only Colin Milton points out that Leonard's work 'is often "unfinished", open-ended, inconclusive; the sketch, the fragment, the outline, the doodle, are among his uncharacteristic forms.'<sup>84</sup> This thesis addresses these gaps in critical discourse by providing a full discussion of how Leonard's poster poems sustain central motifs such as the relationship of language to economic power, the transformation of literature into cultural property, and the existential nature of human interaction.

Another approach commonly adopted by critics is to compare Leonard's early poetry with other poets writing at the same time. In *Modern Scottish Poetry* (2004) Christopher Whyte categorises the development of post-modern Scottish poetry in a similar way to Douglas Dunn in his introduction to *Twentieth-Century Scottish Poetry*, though Dunn arranges the anthology by date of birth and Whyte by the dates of the poet's most compelling work.<sup>85</sup> In an unlikely comparison, Whyte aligns Leonard's *Six Glasgow Poems* with Robert Garioch's translations of nineteenth-century poet Giuseppe Belli's

<sup>83</sup> Colin Nicholson, 'Nomadic Subjects in Recent Poetry', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 80-96 (p. 89).

<sup>84</sup> Milton, 'Dialects, Orality and the Poetry of Tom Leonard: In the Beginning Was the Sound', p. 578.

<sup>85</sup> Whyte, Christopher, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

sonnets into Lothian Scots. Whyte views the challenge of transforming ‘stigmatised forms of language’ into engaging material is the common ground between the two poets. Despite the fact that they were both writing in unpopular forms, however, Garioch’s use of Lothian Scots and his rhyming, metrical style do not readily compare with Leonard’s demotic speech and theoretical approach to language. As Whyte points out the two men worked at opposite directions: Garioch’s poetry aimed to ‘standardising’ Lothian Scots into the mainstream literature with his precise spelling and phonetics, whereas Leonard intended to shock with a form of phonetic-based writing that took unfamiliar readers some time to decipher.<sup>86</sup> Though Whyte puts forth link between the two poets, a more apt comparison would be the one made earlier in this introduction between Leonard and Ian Hamilton Finlay and Stephen Mulrine who were both writing in Glaswegian phonetic dialect in the 1960s.

Robert Crawford and Sarah Broom compare Leonard to Leeds poet Tony Harrison, who composes in demotic speech and shares Leonard’s opinions on the politics of language. In *Devolving English Literature* (2000), Crawford groups Leonard with Harrison, Seamus Heaney and Douglas Dunn because of their shared view that education and language is class-based. Crawford states that Leonard and Harrison’s use of stigmatised language comes ‘as a gesture of solidarity with lower class speakers of a provincial vernacular, as well as using these forms as means of interrogating the established structures of linguistic and cultural power.’<sup>87</sup> Sarah Broom weighs Leonard’s work against Tony Harrison in a critical discussion about the poets’ shared devotion to challenging the cultural elite. As Broom states, ‘Harrison and Leonard share a focus on the school as the site of cultural domination.’<sup>88</sup> However, Harrison’s commitment to metrical verse and rhyming patterns does not allow for an easy comparison with Leonard’s spontaneous narratives. Leonard himself is dubious about being compared to Harrison commenting in an interview that:

---

<sup>86</sup> Whyte, p. 131.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 277.

<sup>88</sup> Sarah Broom, *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 23.

Harrison has this peculiar attitude to his father, as if he was baffled by his father's working-class culture, and as if because he's been to university, he was no longer working-class. I regard that as bad faith and I don't have any patience for that.<sup>89</sup>

There is also some criticism which situates Leonard in the areas of religion, philosophy and gender. Patrick Reilly points out that Leonard is an 'outstanding example of this literature of a ghetto', which 'gives a voice to the voiceless'.<sup>90</sup> James McGonigal echoes these remarks in his assessment of Leonard's poetry as an 'oppositional, humorous and demotic' response to 'a Catholic childhood'.<sup>91</sup> Matt McGuire speaks of 'poems of a much more subdued, considered tenor' with some poems such as 'walking in the park' and 'June the second' seeking to address the 'existential experience unique to human relationships'.<sup>92</sup> McGuire does not unpack any details concerning the 'existential experience', leaving readers to speculate. Leonard's representation of marginalised figures in his poetry, as previously mentioned, finds common ground with the work of other male writers. Douglas Gifford's essay *The Dear Green Place? The Novel in the West of Scotland* (1985) describes a pattern of pessimism particular to West of Scotland male characters and their male authors. Citing authors such as Robin Jenkins, Alan Sharp, Archie Hind, Alan Spence, Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and poet Tom Leonard, he describes a state of social alienation:

In each case the novel will present a sensitive protagonist struggling to articulate his reactions to his environment; in ways, firstly, in which he has been encouraged at university, at art school, or even within the books he's read and the company he's kept. Gradually he will realise that he cannot accept these ways — or it will be born in violently upon him.<sup>93</sup>

Though Gifford relates contemporary Scottish literature to the work of existentialist writers Albert Camus, Saul Bellow and Salman Rushdie, no direct correlations between the authors' work and social alienation are expressed. This thesis will discuss the significance of alienation in Leonard's work, namely how his presentation of marginalised individuals is a continued theme in his work.

---

<sup>89</sup> Dósa, p. 82.

<sup>90</sup> Reilly, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> McGonigal, p. 69.

<sup>92</sup> McGuire, p. 127.

<sup>93</sup> Douglas Gifford, *The Dear Green Place? The Novel in the West of Scotland* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1985), p. 8.

The critical tendency to shun his contemporary work relates to a general perception of Leonard as a writer of urban phonetic dialect which is a limited and limiting approach to his oeuvre as exemplified by reviews of Leonard's collected and selected poems, *outside the narrative*. This collection was reviewed positively in journals and newspapers, but the reviews again suggested that Leonard's greatest contribution as a poet has been his poetry in urban phonetic dialect. In the *Scottish Review of Books*, Ian Bell analysed Leonard's career as a 'radical' language poet and stated that Leonard achieved his relative fame only as a 'dialect' poet.<sup>94</sup> Bell noted that Leonard's poems in urban dialect reveal his accomplished ear: 'he makes it look and sound seductively easy' and that the 'bad words' within his poetry were proof of their authenticity. However, Bell argued that Leonard's poems in urban dialect narrowed his potential audience; though Leonard was speaking 'thi trooth' to the British establishment concerning power and language, the poems themselves are 'caricatured and typecast. They are shown to their wee pigeon-holes and crammed in whether they like it or not. And they limit their audience.' Furthermore, Bell bluntly suggests that had Leonard 'moderated his language – I mean exactly what I say – he would be more widely read and published beyond Scotland than he is' and asks 'so have all those fine "Glaswegian" poems been self-defeating?'<sup>95</sup> Bell's negative assessment of Leonard's output dismisses the aesthetic innovation and political heft of his poetry in urban dialect and continues to prove the point that critics tend to focus on the early part of Leonard's career.

Paul Batchelor of the *Guardian* provided a more circumspect view of Leonard's oeuvre but also implies that the highlight of the collection is Leonard's early creative phases, stating that the book contains 'a generous selection of Leonard's poetry from 1965-2009. Many of the earlier poems are faithful to the speech of Leonard's native Glasgow, capturing not only the sound of a particular accent, but the hesitancies and false starts that characterise an individual's speech.'<sup>96</sup> Batchelor's review chimes with other critics who tend to gloss over the significance of the title. In the *Morning Star*, Andy Croft stated that Leonard's *outside the narrative* gathers the bulk of Leonard's work since the 1960s. He praised the collection's obvious points, deeming it 'furious, funny and brave', and cleverly

<sup>94</sup> Ian Bell, 'No Patter Merchant', *Scottish Review of Books*, Vol. 5 Issue 3 (October 2009), p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> Bell, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Batchelor, 'The right to 'speak proper'', *Guardian*, 3 October 2009, p. 14.

summarised the text as ‘William Carlos Williams meets Brecht with a Glasgow accent.’ Croft briefly addressed the importance of the title by commenting that ‘Leonard writes for all those who have been told they live “outside the narrative” who are made to feel like foreigners on their native soil.’<sup>97</sup> However, Croft did not elaborate on this loaded and important statement and instead quoted humorous lines for the remainder of the review. In doing so, he neglected to discuss the significance of that phrase and how its application to the rest of Leonard's work.

### **Alienation in the work of Tom Leonard: in the contexts of religion, class, language**

This thesis is intended to fill critical gaps regarding Leonard's oeuvre. Namely, the absence of holistic discussion of his entire repertoire; an unbalanced critical focus on his early poetry in urban phonetic dialect at the expense of his prose, anthologising work, and poetry in Standard English; and the absence of a theme which effectively binds Leonard's entire corpus. This thesis initially responds to these gaps by forming a chronological study of Leonard's body of work from the years 1965-2009. In a span of forty-four years, Leonard produced three full poetry collections, a book of essays, an anthology of Renfrewshire writers and a biography of the poet James Thomson. Though Leonard's work contains a range of narrative styles and genres, the thesis argues that a single strategy binds his varied oeuvre: the presentation of marginalised individuals who feel a sense of separation from society. The thesis investigates Leonard's holistic collection of poems and prose and the way in which it presents individuals who feel alienated; initially in the areas of religion, class and language and later in the presentation of individuals who suffer from self-alienation and experience fragmentation within their own minds and bodies, losing a sense of their identity. It will also demonstrate how, in books such as *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative*, Leonard's exploration of marginalised figures take on a philosophical dimension as his poems explore concepts of existential freedom and human responsibility. Leonard's integrates existential concepts into his poetry, especially by encouraging individuals to establish freedom from cultural expectations concerning wealth, politics, and

---

<sup>97</sup> Andy Croft, ‘Review of Outside the Narrative’, *Morning Star*, 17 August 2009, <[www.morningstaronline.co.uk/news/content/view/full/79415](http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/news/content/view/full/79415)> [accessed 15 January 2012].

education and exhorting like-minded individuals who seek existential freedom in their daily life to band together. Leonard's focus on building such a community ultimately leads to his declaring that he has located a universal voice and identified the qualities of a universal humanism. He articulates, but does not resolve, the emotional state of individuals who feel alienated from society or within their own minds and bodies. This thesis provides an aesthetic framework for a holistic reading of Leonard's work by applying definitions of alienation from a sociological perspective, as well as identifying and analysing the integration of existential and humanism concepts which Leonard uses as theoretical framework in his poetry.

The concept of socio-psychological 'alienation' is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as one who is 'alienated'; and to 'alienate' one is to 'make someone feel isolated or estranged'.<sup>98</sup> This definition is too general to be of critical use in demonstrating how each of Leonard's books presents the voices of marginalised individuals. However, this section of the thesis presents specific definitions of alienation which resonate thematically with aspects of Leonard's cultural critique of the social limiting of individuals who feel alienated. Though not a literary critic, Frank Johnson's socio-psychological exploration of the definition of 'alienation as separation' is applicable to the work of Tom Leonard. Johnson draws attention to 'those processes or states of alienation devolving from the (inevitable, ontological) separation of two or more entities. Along with separation, the notion of a tension existing within or between these entities is integral in this denotation.'<sup>99</sup> Johnson describes both the disconnection of two entities and the anxiety and estrangement that results from this disconnection. This definition of alienation as the tension following the 'separation between two entities' is applicable to Leonard's work, which articulates the painful space between individuals and whatever they are alienated from; be it an absence of belonging to a community, or within their own minds and bodies as they struggle to understand their own identity. In his poetry and prose, Leonard locates identity, form and content in the creation and expressions of marginalised voices who feel they are separated from a secure or conventional sense of community, establishment or identity.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, 'alienation' <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/alienation>> [accessed 12 Jan 2012]

<sup>99</sup> Frank Johnson, *Alienation: Concept, Term and Meanings* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), p. 30.

<sup>100</sup> Johnson, p. 30.

Linguistically, formally, in social and historical contexts, Leonard's exploration and commitment to this theme is a continuous presence in his writing.

Throughout his work, Leonard represents marginalised figures using a number of formal devices and within different social contexts. In *Intimate Voices*, Leonard's uses religious references and imagery as prisms through which to comment on the perceived stereotypes and alienation of the working-classes. By examining his fictive characters by way of their Catholic religion, Leonard discovers individuals who are alienated from the wider community by class and language. This is exemplified in *Six Glasgow Poems* where Leonard subverts and satirises Christian symbols in order to comment on working-class values. For example, in 'A Good Thief', Leonard narrates the voice of the thief crucified at Jesus' right hand in a blackly comedic mock-up of the Christian holiday, Good Friday. Leonard creates two blasphemous parallels: the Glasgow football scene and the crucifixion of Jesus. The mention of the 'GEMM' kicking off at 'three a cloke' references both kick-off time and the time at which Christ is said to have died. A further allusive joke connects Celtic Football Club's stadium nickname 'Paradise' with Christ's statement on the cross that 'I will be with you in Paradise'.<sup>101</sup> With this material, Leonard subverts religious symbolism and adopts it as a strategy for discussing marginalised group identity. Other examples of this strategy will be investigated more fully later in the thesis.

Leonard also voices the societal alienation facing working-class, Glaswegian males due to the social implications of their accent. He articulates the social and political prejudices working against this particular group within contemporary British society. *Intimate Voices: Selected Work 1965-1983* is predominantly taken up with poetry in Glaswegian urban phonetic dialect; addressing, for example, the subject of sectarianism in Glasgow, and representing stereotypical, hyper-aggressive male characters whose objective is to reclaim a sense of power. Leonard creates socially alienated males in poems such as 'Hardmen', and 'Pffff' where aggressive male narrators display acts of hyper-masculinity in their use of verbal threats and their objectification of women in order to mask a sense of disconnection from society.<sup>102</sup> In these works and others, Leonard creates stereotypical working-class males in order to reveal their marginalised socio-political position and the

---

<sup>101</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices: 1965-1983* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1984), p. 9.

<sup>102</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 56 & 58.

ways in which society negatively perceives their accent. These characteristics of Leonard's narrators resonate with Rotenstreich's definition of social alienation as people who suffer from: 'loneliness, self-isolation from, or loss of contact with, others and society, as well as the replacement of emotional reactions and relations by a callous, mechanical attitude' in distinctly unsympathetic behaviour which illustrates a lack of attachment to their environment.<sup>103</sup> Leonard presents this 'lack of attachment' through the use of impressionistic imagery which describes specific objects in a distinctly melancholy manner. This is seen in the surrealistic imagery of work such as 'Storm Damage', a poem in the present-tense about a narrator who suffers from a flash-back of child abuse which uses the narrator's 'sensory experience' as a means to convey the depth of his conflict. The use of 'sensory experience' in William Carlos Williams' work, an acknowledged influence on Leonard, is described by Carl Rapp as one of the ways that Williams' poems describe 'with great accuracy and intensity, the poet's sensory experiences'.<sup>104</sup> Leonard's use of poetic devices to convey a sense of disconnection in his poetry will be discussed at length in the thesis.

In poems in *Intimate Voices* and the sequence 'Hesitations' which is collected in *access to the silence*, Leonard also enacts the feelings of socially marginalised individuals through his engagement with urban phonetic language. Leonard presents a sense of alienation in terms of class and language through the visual presentation and content of his poetry and prose. The presentation of phonetic speech, with its emphasis on sound, tone and pronunciation, contains a variety of devices which give voice to marginalised speakers. Leonard has found a way to present the language issue in the ambiguity of the phonetic text, where the content seems to disparage the Glasgow accent but the form is an aesthetically precise representation of the dialect and endorses its validity. This strategy is apparent in the third poem from 'Unrelated Incidents', whereby Leonard exposes the traits associated with a Received Pronunciation voice by presenting it in urban phonetic dialect:

---

<sup>103</sup> Nathan Rotenstreich, *Alienation: The Concept and its Reception* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1989) p.79.

<sup>104</sup> Carl Rapp, *William Carlos Williams and Romantic Idealism* (Hanover, New Hampshire and London: published for Brown University Press by University Press of New England, 1984)p. 90.



this is thi  
 six a clock  
 news thi  
 man said n  
 thi reason  
 a talk wia  
 BBC accent  
 iz coz yi  
 widny wahnt  
 mi ti talk  
 about thi  
 trooth wia  
 voice lik  
 wanna yoo  
 scruff<sup>105</sup>

The poem produces a unique doubling effect in the juxtaposition of visual presentation and textual content: the content disparages the Glasgow accent, but is presented in the form of language that it criticises. Paradoxically, Leonard's use of urban phonetic dialect can also be seen as an alienating device in that the form's defamiliarising presentation will not be immediately understood by all readers. Nathan Rotenstreich defines language as an 'alienated structure' for humans: 'we do not understand a language immediately and we have to acquire it.'<sup>106</sup> Morton Kaplan also argues that language produces alienation through the fallibility of humans who misunderstand contexts: 'The language we employ in the process of thought could not be used publicly by us unless the meanings of words were independent of our individual wills. Yet these necessary characteristics become dysfunctional in some circumstances ... Language too, like all tools, can produce alienation.'<sup>107</sup> In a sense, Leonard's use of urban phonetic dialect enacts the problems it identifies, as it potentially alienates readers who are not already familiar with it.

Leonard also explores social alienation and marginalised voices in his non-fiction works *Radical Renfrew: Poems from the French Revolution to the Second World War* (1991) and *Places of the Mind* by presenting a cultural critique of the social limitations faced by neglected poets and writers. This is achieved initially through his selection of alienated figures retrieved from historical archives. In *Radical Renfrew*, this thesis will argue, Leonard presents the biographies and poems of historical figures who have suffered

---

<sup>105</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p.88.

<sup>106</sup> Rotenstreich, *Alienation: The Concept and its Reception* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1989), p. 81.

<sup>107</sup> Kaplan, p. 126.

from social alienation in terms of politics, class, gender, and sexual orientation. The anthology features writers hand-picked by Leonard from the Paisley library archives and he focuses on the alienation of predominantly male working-class poets. Leonard anthologises the work of Renfrewshire weavers, Irish writers and women whose radical and political poetry, he argues, was often scorned or ignored during their lifetimes. His inclusion of neglected writers alienated by poverty, gender and sexuality as well as radical politics embodies Rotenstreich's view of alienation that: 'A person is alienated from society when he feels or believes that he cannot fulfil in society that which, according to his conviction, is his rightful role and place in it. A person is alienated from society since society is alienated from him.'<sup>108</sup> Leonard's selection of writers was able to include the activist poet-weaver Alexander Wilson, the feminist poet Marion Bernstein, as well as poets who wrote about conflicted sexuality, such as the anonymous poem which speaks about loving a person of the same gender: 'Jenny – a Love Lay' by Anon ('Isabel') and includes the lines 'Her very smile my heart could move / To strange wild throbs of joy; / With Jenny I'd have fallen in love, / If I had been a boy'.<sup>109</sup> This thesis will argue that Leonard's anthologising method used alienation as its primary locator and determinant.

The thesis also maintains that a similar process of constructing alienated figures can be detected in Leonard's biography of James Thomson, *Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson ("B.V.")* (1993). Chapter 3 argues that the biography is a study of social alienation as well as an investigation of the writer's life and work. The biography first began as a postgraduate thesis at the University of Glasgow and is the product of sixteen years of research on an underappreciated and marginalised figure in Scottish literary history who wrote the long poem *The City of Dreadful Night* (1847).<sup>110</sup> Leonard creates a socially alienated figure in Thomson by presenting excerpts of Thomson's journals to track the author's decline into depression and alcoholism, his feelings of low confidence and his gradual withdrawal from society, as seen by Leonard's fixation with Thomson's words on evening of on 4 November 1864, when Thomson destroyed his writings: 'burned all my old papers ... took me five hours ... I could no less

---

<sup>108</sup> Rotenstreich, p. 79.

<sup>109</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 234.

<sup>110</sup> Tom Leonard, *Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson ("B.V.")*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), p. xii.

than consume the past. I can now better face my future, come in what guise it may.'<sup>111</sup> Leonard focuses on presenting aspects of Thomson's destructive behaviour in order to create the biography of an alienated figure.

This thesis argues the essays included in *Reports From the Present: Selected Work 1982-94*, come across as deliberately disengaged from popular culture and current events, despite the book's title which promises to analyse current affairs. This retreat is further evidenced by Leonard's use of verbal irony to quickly dismiss issues and avoid having to express a more sophisticated political opinion. Using devices such as verbal irony, the works in this collection appears to be deliberately disengaging from popular culture and contemporary commentary.<sup>112</sup> This is demonstrated in Leonard's piece 'Handy Form for Cultural Artists', a deconstruction of the administrative duties expected of artists in Glasgow's City of Culture. This is a post-modern invention designed, in its provision of possible options in an ironically polite manner, to assist all types of artists who refused participate in the City of Culture. Leonard mimics the language and semiotics of administrative work through the ironic insertion of office jargon phrases and symbols. The piece is filled with italicised terms, asterisks, blank spaces and possible replies for the artist to tick off as necessary: 'Dear/ Thank you for your invitation/commission,\*for me to participate/contribute\*/display/write an article/write a play/write a poem/sing /discuss/act'...'.<sup>113</sup> In Leonard's parody of the situation, the text provides material which comments on the transference of culture in postmodern society but does not actually engage with the issue. Furthermore, Leonard's work neglects some of the pressing political topics of the time, such as Thatcherism and the poll tax; he comments remotely on warfare in essays such as 'On the Mass Bombing of Iraq and Kuwait'; and increasingly, his articles are not of his own volition but originate as invitations from magazines. Leonard's essays in this collection are suggestive of Richard Schat's observation that the contemporary writer can alienate himself from popular culture 'if he "rejects" it, or has an attitude of indifference to or detachment from it'.<sup>114</sup> The collection ends with analyses of the narrative

---

<sup>111</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xiii.

<sup>112</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: the theory and politics of irony* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 11.

<sup>113</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 211.

<sup>114</sup> Richard Schat, *Alienation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1976), p. 176.

structure and poetics inherent in the sequence *nora's place* where Leonard's consistent interest in alienated figures refocuses around the issue of self-alienation.

### **Self alienation, Social alienation and Existentialism**

In the 1990s and onwards, there is a shift in Leonard's work from defining alienation within the context of class, religious or cultural structures to creating poems and poster poems concerned with individuals who have a fragmented sense of identity or a sense of self-alienation. Self-alienation occurs when an individual experiences fragmentation within his or her own mind and body, or when an individual 'is said to have lost not just the ability to express some or most of his genuine abilities but to have lost his self, his identity altogether.'<sup>115</sup> Self-alienation can be a symptom of psychiatric illness and is discussed at length in the work of psychiatrist R.D. Laing, especially in his study of schizophrenia, *The Divided Self* (1960). A sense of feeling fragmented and 'more dead than alive' within one's body express an existential alienation that Laing terms 'ontological insecurity'. This is a condition whereby sufferers feel 'split' from their bodies and their surroundings.<sup>116</sup> As Laing states, the alienated individual 'may feel more unreal than real; in a literal sense, more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and autonomy are always in question.'<sup>117</sup> Laing further breaks down the concept of 'ontological insecurity' into three distinct sensations: engulfment, implosion, petrification. In engulfment, a person resists close relationships as they threaten their individuality. In implosion, an individual feels isolated due to an extreme sense of emptiness. Petrification equals the sense of being turned into an object.<sup>118</sup> In the discussion of the poetry pamphlet *nora's place* which is included in *Reports from the Present*, the thesis applies R.D. Laing's concept of ontological insecurity, including engulfment, implosion, and petrification, in order to deepen understanding of Leonard's portrayal of a mentally fragile woman and her inability to understand and define her own identity. The fragment below illustrates Nora's acknowledgement that her sense of self should not be depersonalised as a useful object:

---

<sup>115</sup> Feuerlicht, p. 38.

<sup>116</sup> R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (London: Pelican Books, 1973), p. 42.

<sup>117</sup> Laing, p. 42.

<sup>118</sup> Laing, p. 44-46.

how quirky I am  
but

I am not a table  
or a pen  
or a hill<sup>119</sup>

The inclusion of these specific yet unconnected items such as a 'table', 'pen' or hill illustrates that Nora is not entirely certain of her purpose, but knows that her identity does not entirely consist of serving or being used by others, in the way these objects do. Identity crisis of an ontological nature is a concern in *nora's place* and Leonard centres the fragments in some poems so that the white space suggests feelings of isolation. A fuller investigation of the ways in which Leonard presents self-alienation through the character of Nora will be provided later in the thesis.

The final aspect of alienation which Leonard investigates in his work is a sense of social alienation from an existential perspective. Leonard integrates concepts of existentialism and humanism into his work to create a marginalised and socially-alienated voice expressing a desire for individuals to attain a sense of existential freedom in their daily lives. In *access to the silence*, Leonard includes poems which question whether it is possible to determine one's identity despite the constraining effects of memory, literature and employment structures, when in urban or domestic environments or within relationships. These poems and sequences share links to Sartre's essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946), which is used as a theoretical framework. The poems move from expressing the desire to achieve existential freedom in daily life, to speaking of extending a sense of responsibility to others. Humanism is also connected to 'freedom and responsibility', which work together to define human responsibility in an existentialist context.<sup>120</sup> Though man is essentially free to make his own decisions, he is also representing all of man. As Sartre states: 'I am therefore responsible for myself and for everyone else, and I am fashioning a certain image of man as I choose him to be. In choosing myself, I choose man.'<sup>121</sup> For Leonard, humanism is the banding together of individuals who feel isolated from the mainstream narrative and takes the form of a desire for socio-economically, underprivileged people to be valued in their communities and not

---

<sup>119</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 131.

<sup>120</sup> Flynn, p. 8.

<sup>121</sup> Sartre, p. 25.

be disempowered by their social class. Leonard speaks of identifying the voice of the universal human through the use of lower case and calculated spacing on the page.

Social and psychological alienation might be seen as tricky concepts to apply to Leonard given his position in Scottish Literature as a white male with an enhanced reputation in both literary and academic circles. Furthermore, Leonard's output is relatively small but wide-ranging and contains both poetry and prose. He recycles the same works in a number of different publications, as evidenced by sequences such as *nora's place* which appears in *Reports From the Present*, *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative*. The dearth of literary criticism discussing his entire output also makes commenting holistically on his work a challenging task. However, the exploration of individual social alienation is one theme that persists across Leonard's oeuvre, though applied in a number of different contexts and forms. This thesis will argue that the tension of being and feeling alienated from society, one's surroundings and from one's own mind and body is the critical framework around which Leonard's output gathers, though the ways in which he approaches the various aspects of alienation change and evolve according to his shifting interests in politics, history, personal isolation and poetic form.

### **Alienation in the Work of Tom Leonard: chapter structure**

This thesis frames each chapter around a major collection or book. Therefore, it has an introduction, five core chapters which correspond to a major work (or two works if the texts share a thematic link to the topic of alienation), and a conclusion. The first chapter deals with work up to *Intimate Voices* which includes *Six Glasgow Poems* (1969), *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* (1970), *Poems* (1973), *Bunnit Husslin* (1975), *Three Glasgow Writers* (1976) and *Ghostie Men* (1980). The chapter discusses how Leonard presents of social alienation of young males through the lens of religious imagery, masculinity and language. The chapter also discusses Leonard's use of surreal imagery in his poems to personify certain objects with a melancholy description, an example of the way in which Leonard integrates Williams Carlos Williams' objectivist and modernist poetics into his own work.

Chapter Two investigates Leonard's creative methods when presenting and selecting marginalised figures in his anthology *Radical Renfrew: Writers from the French Revolution until the First World War*. Leonard was Writer in Residence at the Paisley Central Library from 1988-90 and discovered the forgotten works of a number of West of Scotland writers in the library's archives. Leonard's anthology categories of 'religion', 'anti-ruling classes', 'unemployment' suggest the social alienation he believes these writers faced. This chapter examines the consequences of Leonard's anthologising methodology and argues that his selections were more personal than has previously been recognized and gathered around his interest in various forms of social alienation that extended beyond radical politics.

In Chapter Three, Leonard's interest in alienated figures in literature reaches a material climax in his devotion to James Thomson. Leonard had reserved a space for Thomson in *Radical Renfrew* on the grounds that he was born in Port Glasgow even though he lived most of his life in London.<sup>122</sup> This chapter examines the way in which Leonard's interest in the circumstances surrounding Thomson's seminal work *The City of Dreadful Night*, as well as Thomson's struggle with depression and alcoholism, informs the biography. The chapter includes analyses of the structure of *The City of Dreadful Night* mirrors the structure of *Places of the Mind*, and points out thematic similarities between *The City of Dreadful Night* and Leonard's own long poem, *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street*. The chapter conducts a structural analysis of Leonard's unconventional biographical methods and argues that his methodology was intended to highlight Thomson as an alienated and neglected figure.

The fourth chapter argues that Leonard's hybrid collection of poetry and prose, *Reports From the Present*, illustrates the work of an increasingly disengaged critic in a number of ways, including his resistance to discussing timely topics such as Thatcherism and the Poll Tax; his application of verbal irony in his pieces; and his discussion of modern warfare from a remote perspective. It identifies Leonard's increasing interest in self-alienation through an analysis of the poetry sequence *nora's place*. The chapter applies R.D. Laing's psychological concept of 'ontological insecurity' in order to demonstrate the ways in which Leonard presents a woman suffering from self-alienation and it suggests

---

<sup>122</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xii.

possible links between a particular case study of Laing's in *The Divided Self* and the narrative details of *nora's place*.

Chapter Five investigates the collections of *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative* and analyses the ways in which Leonard presents alienation in his poetry through discussions of existential freedom and humanism. The chapter argues that Leonard explores existentialism and humanism as frameworks for the creation of a marginalised and socially-alienated voice which expresses an idealistic desire for individuals to attain a sense of existential freedom in their daily lives. By reframing ideas about existential freedom and human responsibility, Leonard poems maintain that one has the freedom to choose one's identity, despite the cultural expectations of class, wealth, status and language that press on individuals in society. Leonard creates this alienated voice through shifting perspectives, fragmented stanzas and lower-case lettering; typographic options enhanced with a word processor. This chapter argues that Leonard's innovative engagements with materiality are both a sign of his evolved poetics and a manifestation of his desire to search for like-minded, alienated individuals through the establishment of a common voice.



## Chapter One: *Intimate Voices: Selected Work 1965-1983*

The introduction to this thesis provided a contextualised view of Leonard's influential though narrow place in literature from the years 1969-2009, discussed the dominant characteristics of academic and journalistic criticism on Leonard's work and argued that the exploration of alienated individuals is the binding strategy in Leonard's poetry and prose. Looking at Leonard's work holistically, one can argue that Leonard's oeuvre presents marginalised individuals by articulating their feelings of estrangement from a sense of community and belonging due to their perceived social class, or within their own bodies as they struggle to define their own identity. The introduction defined social alienation and self alienation as a sense of feeling estranged or purposeless in society, or in the case of self-alienation, a sense of not being able to ascertain their own identity within their own mind.<sup>1</sup> The introduction concluded by discussing, chapter by chapter, Leonard's engagement with alienation in the areas of class, language and within the self in existential terms throughout his work.

Chapter one focuses on Leonard's cultural critique of the stigmas attached to the working-class accent and the creation of individuals who feel alienated from society, most of them young males, in his collection *Intimate Voices: Poetry and Prose from 1965 to 1983* (1984). This collection comprises previously published pamphlets including *Six Glasgow Poems* (1969), *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* (1970), *Poems* (1973), *Bunnit Husslin* (1975), *Three Glasgow Writers with Alex Hamilton and James Kelman* (1976) and *Ghostie Men* (1980).<sup>2</sup> This chapter analyses the various devices Leonard employs in order to create a fictive alienated voice, such as the use of religious references and imagery as prisms to comment on working-class values; the exploration of Glasgow

---

<sup>1</sup>See Johnson, p. 41 and Oken, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Leonard, *Six Glasgow Poems* (Glasgow: Midnight Press, 1969).  
 Leonard, *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* (Glasgow: Midnight Press, 1970).  
 Leonard, *Poems* (Dublin: E&T O'Brien, 1973).  
 Leonard, *Bunnit Husslin* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1975).  
 Leonard, *Three Glasgow Writers* (Glasgow: Molendinar Press, 1976).  
 Leonard, *My Name Is Tom* (Glasgow: National Book League, 1978).  
 Leonard, *Ghostie Men* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1980).

stereotypes, including the young working-class male and the violent ‘hardman’; the use of poetic devices from outside influences like American poet William Carlos Williams which highlight the characters sense of sadness and alienation; and the use of visually-challenging urban phonetic dialect as a means to show how poetry can be an ‘alienating’ structure to those unfamiliar with the language.

Leonard’s poetry uses a variety of narrative devices in order to present marginalised voices. One of the ways he constructs an alienated persona in *Intimate Voices* is by using Catholicism as a satirical platform to produce what James McGonigal calls his ‘oppositional, humorous and demotic poetry’.<sup>3</sup> By examining his fictive characters by way of their Catholic religion, Leonard discovers individuals who are alienated from the wider community by class and language. As Patrick Reilly states, Leonard ‘gives a voice to the voiceless’ with a salient characteristic being ‘a violence forever ready to explode’ as seen in the poems like ‘The Good Thief’ and *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street*. Reilly views Leonard’s early work as the poetry of the ‘deprived’ and the ‘underdog’ which is impossible to understand without its ‘religious matrix’.<sup>4</sup> However, he argues that its real target is ‘educational rather than religious’ and it has social justice and ‘self-promoting elitism’ in the crosshairs.<sup>5</sup> Though Reilly’s analysis focuses on Leonard’s work in Glaswegian dialect, this thesis will demonstrate that social justice and elitism are issues that Leonard returns to again and again across a forty year career.

In addition, Colin Milton sees Leonard's use of religious imagery in his poetry as part of a ‘wider radicalism’ which questions the relations between class and language; a comparison which is extended to Leonard’s exploration of the interrelationship between Christian concepts of power and salvation.<sup>6</sup> Paradoxically, Leonard's enigmatic use of Catholic imagery and allusion in his poetry can also have an alienating effect on readers who are unfamiliar with its code. The exploration of particular religious events such as Good Friday and the various sacramental references in the poems restricts understanding for those unfamiliar with Christian teaching and Catholic sacerdotal authority. This chapter

---

<sup>3</sup> James McGonigal, ‘Millennial Days: Religion as Consolation and Desolation in Contemporary Scottish Poetry’ in *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 41 (2000), pp. 55-76 (p. 67).

<sup>4</sup> Reilly, p. 7& 9.

<sup>5</sup> Reilly, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Milton, p. 576.

of the thesis will set Leonard's *Intimate Voices* in the context of his entire body of work and argue that it finds its enduring value in the creation of fictive, alienated voices, viewed in a 'religious matrix' in *Intimate Voices* but subsequently explored in different forms and different contexts and emerging as a binding strategy in Leonard's oeuvre.

Leonard explores the cultural stigmas attached to Glasgow working-class subculture with a particular focus on violent males, a socially marginalised group which has a major presence in *Intimate Voices*. He creates a fictional violent persona in his company of Glasgow 'hardmen': a brand of sexually hyped, violent, religious and homophobic male outsiders well known in Scottish literature from works like Alexander McArthur's and H. Kingsley Long's *No Mean City* (1935), William McIlvanney's *Docherty* (1975), and James Kelman's *Not Not While the Giro* (1983). Leonard's creation of male characters in violent and urbanised situations is a strategy that aggressively challenges cultural assumptions concerning social class. However, his poetry can also flirt with cultural stereotyping in its portrayal of Glasgow males who overwhelmingly express a sense of alienation through displays of anger and physical confrontation.

If we view the narrators in Leonard's *Intimate Voices* as a series of characters, we can see that they speak almost exclusively in urban phonetic dialect as a means of establishing working-class identity. Leonard's use of urban phonetic dialect allows for an additional textual layer within the narrative. His engagement with the materiality of language allows him to present Glaswegian dialect as a deliberately 'alienating' structure, particularly in terms of the text's opaque and defamiliarised visual appearance. Leonard's transcription of Glaswegian urban dialect can disorient and alienate unfamiliar readers, while simultaneously welcoming those who are familiar with Glaswegian urban dialect. At the same time, his use of urban phonetic dialect also rebuts cultural assumptions about Glaswegian dialect not being a suitable medium for art. The methods by which Leonard's poetry uses language both exclusively and inclusively, how he presents oral characteristics of language and how he politicises the oral through his critical and ironic content will be evaluated in this chapter.

This chapter provides a chronological walk through *Intimate Voices*, discussing Leonard's explorations of socially alienated males, from the young boys in *Six Glasgow Poems* and *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* to the employed husbands and fathers in

*Ghostie Men*. The chapter concludes that this collection's strength comes from its gradual accumulation of books; in the culmination of different books and works in small increments to present marginalised voices and cultural perceptions of language in different contexts.

### **Critical reception: *Intimate Voices***

Fifteen years after Leonard's angry debut *Six Glasgow Poems*, which were a product of Leonard's 'rage' that the Glaswegian dialect was not being represented in literature, Leonard's reputation as a radical dissenter was augmented by a controversy surrounding *Intimate Voices*<sup>7</sup>. In November 1984, Leonard won the Saltire Society / Royal Bank Scottish Literary Award for the collection, sharing the award with David Daiches for *God and Poets: The Gifford Lectures* (1984). In March 1985, *The Scotsman* newspaper ran a story entitled 'Region bans top book of poetry'. *Intimate Voices* was considered inappropriate for inclusion in Central Regional School libraries. The ban was introduced by Councillor Michael Kelly, chairman of the Central Region's education committee. He doubted the collection's merit and appeal: 'I have seen the book and I don't think it's very funny, to be quite honest. We have had some complaints.' Despite the book's recent accolade, Kelly continued: 'There are some harmful words in it, and I'm not talking about bloody.'<sup>8</sup>

The judges of the Saltire Award immediately came to Leonard's defence. Dr Isobel Murray stated that the collection contained 'very commonly used language that is not very commonly used in poetry' and 'ought to be explored with the children in the classroom rather than banned from the library shelves.' Paul Henderson Scott said, 'It is deplorable and a quite unreasonable piece of censorship. I suspect it is based on political prejudice.' Councillor Kelly did not believe that politics inspired the ban. He responded with a metaphor: 'Some people would it was the naked truth, but sometimes the naked truth has to be clothed.' Isolating himself from the incident, Leonard declined the opportunity for rebuttal and stated from his Glasgow home: 'I don't give a damn frankly. How they run

---

<sup>7</sup> Dosa, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Bain, p. 4.

their schools is up to them. I write poems and I would rather keep my energy for my poems.’<sup>9</sup> This episode suggests that Leonard has the tendency to alienate himself from established authorities through his refusal to defend himself against the council's view of his poetry and the ‘appropriateness’ of its content in a school setting. In a wider sense, this episode also illustrates the separation, or alienation, of alternative literature from established institutions, such as school libraries, due to cultural assumptions concerning the ‘quality’ of the literature written in urban phonetic dialect.

### ***Six Glasgow Poems (1969)***

In *Six Glasgow Poems*, Leonard explores Glaswegian identity by presenting a series of voices who speak in a stigmatised form of language and who feel marginalised from a sense of belonging on the ground of their working-class status. The voices in the sequence can be perceived as stereotypical in the topics it presents: football, sectarianism and street violence. Cumulatively, however, these stereotypical topics present a particular view of working-class interests. Leonard's discussion of these topics, as well as his use of urban phonetic dialect is rooted in the author's commitment to locality which, in turn, owes something to the influence of William Carlos Williams. Williams was part of an American Modernist poetry movement which aimed to frame its poetry in locality and imagery. Speaking on behalf of his contemporaries Hilda Doolittle, Ezra Pound and Marianne Moore, Williams said, ‘There was a heat in us, a core and drive that was gathering headway upon a theme of rediscovery of a primary impetus, the elementary principle of all art, in the local conditions.’<sup>10</sup> Together with America’s modernist poets, Williams searched for a suitable rebuttal to T.S. Eliot’s allusive scholarship in *The Waste Land*, and found it in the use of language that mirrored the speech of the American people and painterly imagery to achieve a poetic prosody faithful to one’s own voice:

What were we seeking? No one knew consistently enough to formulate a  
‘movement.’ We were restless and constrained, closely allied with the painters,

---

<sup>9</sup> Bain, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968), p. 146.

Impressionism, Dadaism, surrealism applied to both painting and the poem. What a battle we made of it merely getting rid of capitals at the beginning of every line!<sup>11</sup>

It can be argued that Tom Leonard's *Six Glasgow Poems* can be seen as an antidote to conservative language attitudes in society, specifically the media, and their absence of representations of Glaswegian dialect. As previously Leonard recalls, 'I remember the phrase that was going through my head was we exist, and these fucking people don't recognise that we exist.'<sup>12</sup> Leonard's addressed the problem of underrepresentation by creating characters that represented his own view of Glasgow.

The original *Six Glasgow Poems* pamphlet has an ambiguous and makeshift appearance which contrasts with the poet's specific portrayals of Glasgow urban life within the text. According to the book jacket, the first printing of *Six Glasgow Poems* was carried out by Tom McGrath's group 'The Other People' in 1969.<sup>13</sup> A second edition was published by Midnight Publications in 1970.<sup>14</sup> Pocket-sized and rectangular, the cream-coloured pamphlet contains the author's name in bold, lower-case letters and the title in upper-case letters. Within the pamphlet are six poems, two illustrations and some blank pages which are illustrative of its handmade manufacture. The hand-drawn illustrations are ironic and can be characterised as oddly matched accompaniments to the poems' themes. For example, next to the poem 'The Good Thief' is an illustration of a dark-skinned man in a flat cap with an annoyed expression next to a large-nosed wide mouth man in a tie.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps in lieu of an author photo, the pamphlet closes on a self-reflective note with a picture of a small, bearded man walking a dog under a lamppost.<sup>16</sup> The lack of specifically Glaswegian and/or violent images may be why reprints of these illustrations did not appear in *Intimate Voices*.

As a sequence, *Six Glasgow Poems* is an exploration of religious, language and class issues rendered in urban phonetic language as a piece of transcribed speech. Leonard's representations of urban phonetic dialect characterises the energy, vitality and spontaneous nature of Glasgow speech, as well the capriciousness of such language which

<sup>11</sup> Williams, p. 148.

<sup>12</sup> Boddy, Kasia and Barry Wood, 'Tom Leonard Interviewed in Glasgow', *Edinburgh Review*, 77 (1985), pp. 59-71 p. 68.

<sup>13</sup> Leonard, *Six Glasgow Poems*, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard, *Six Glasgow Poems*, p. 1

<sup>15</sup> Leonard, *Six Glasgow Poems*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Leonard, *Six Glasgow Poems*, p. 12.

can morph quickly from the seemingly harmless to the potentially offensive. Each poem functions as a short monologue with the reader in the part of 'listener'. The effect of these short poems which have a focus on presenting the oral qualities of speech in their phonetically transcribed appearance have a strained visual effect on the reader playing, as Whyte states, 'a sophisticated visual game'.<sup>17</sup>

The opening poem, 'The Good Thief', presents two working-class males, one of whose desire for a sense of belonging is illustrated by how he reaches out to another; as a result they become bonded by their mutual Catholic faith. Reilly states that in this poem, Leonard demonstrates working-class values by uniting 'the Glasgow preoccupations of football and religion with admirable economy'.<sup>18</sup> The poem is a satirical mock-up of the Christian holiday Good Friday, the day on which Jesus was crucified before his resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday. Luke's gospel states that Jesus was crucified between two thieves, both of whom were guilty. The thief on the left hand denied Jesus' innocence but the thief at Jesus' right hand defended Jesus with the words: 'This man has done nothing wrong.' The good thief then asks Jesus: 'Remember me when I come into your kingdom' (Luke 23: 34-42). Leonard's poem envisions an ironic conversation based less on salvation; instead the good thief asks the suspended Christ if he is Catholic. The commonly used Glasgow phrase for greeting others, 'heh jimmy' is used as a vocal 'poke' or prod for attention from the good thief to Christ:

heh jimmy  
 ma right insane yirra pape  
 ma right insane yirwanny us jimmy  
 see it nyir eyes  
 wanny uz<sup>19</sup>

Leonard's slings phonetic syllables together in order to create loaded verbal puns which comment on the poem's theme. Leonard's word choice of 'insane' is a phonetic pun stringing together the two words of 'in saying', but it is also a comment on Catholicism. The simple pun suggests that though the cultural consequences of being Catholic may be 'insane' but followers can find companionship with each other. The narrator surmises that

---

<sup>17</sup> Whyte, p. 134.

<sup>18</sup> Patrick Reilly, Catholics and Scottish Literature 1878-1978, *Innes Review*, Vol. 29, Issue 2, pp.183-203 (189).

<sup>19</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 9.

Jimmy is a fellow Catholic as he can ‘see it nyir eyes / wanny uz’ and this narrative detail suggests a feeling of belonging due to their shared religion. The thief then asks ‘good’ thief at Jesus’ right hand asks him whether he is going to make it to the ‘Gemm’ in the next stanza:

heh jimmy  
lookslik wirgonny miss thi gemm  
gonny miss thi GEMM jimmy  
nearly three a cloke thinnoo<sup>20</sup>

In this stanza Leonard creates two blasphemous parallels to the football scene and the crucifixion in order to present the high value of football in working-class Glasgow and the reflexive relationship between religion and football in the city. The first parallel is the mention of the ‘GEMM’ kicking off at ‘three a cloke’. This references both the kick-off time and the time at which Christ is said to have died; the impact of this parallel is that the working-classes feel these are significant moments.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Christ’s response to the good thief’s request of being remembered in heaven alludes to Christ’s statement on the cross ‘I will be with you in Paradise’. This coincided with the Celtic F.C.’s stadium nickname of ‘Paradise’. This parallel illustrates the celebrated view of football in the lives of the working-classes, how they view the stadium as a kind of haven. In this poem, Leonard describes a distinct Catholic awareness of religious symbols and their relation to which bonds both the good thief and Jesus. Speaking of Leonard’s work, James McGonigal brands this mindset as ‘a devotional or even “sacramental” perception of the natural or the social world’, as followers, like Leonard himself, are able to locate religious symbolism in nonreligious activities and use them to comment on wider social relations.<sup>22</sup> The impact of Leonard’s use of religious imagery in his work flags the social perceptions of language, religion and speech and how these things interact in Glasgow working-class life.

Other devices are at work in this poem to create a realistic presentation of voice. Leonard depicts the narrator’s conversational noises through the insertion of ‘heh’ and ‘ih’ in ‘The Good Thief’, especially when the narrator repeats ‘heh / heh jimmy’.<sup>23</sup> Annabel Hagan describes this device as ‘phatic communion’, which can be defined as

---

<sup>20</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard, *Six Glasgow Poems*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> McGonigal, p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 9.



‘communicative acts with an exclusively social function.’<sup>24</sup> Hagan further discusses the temporal and structural characteristics of speech which become prevalent in *Six Glasgow Poems*:

Conversation is sequential: it does not emerge in a steady stream of speech, but in short segments separated by hesitations and pauses, and by communicative sounds without lexical status such as er or um. These features of normal non-fluency represent an organic part of unplanned spoken language.<sup>25</sup>

Leonard adds temporal characteristics to his phonetic dialect in order to establish that the character's voice controls the narrative situation. Furthermore Leonard experiments with the materiality of the page through his insertion of white space between utterances. This addition of distance between stanzas is a deliberate imitation of time. As Mulrine states, the sounds and pauses also indicate physical gestures or postures in ‘The Good Thief’: ‘Thus the gaps between Tom Leonard’s stanzas – if the single word “heh” may be so termed – are not simply breath-pauses, in the Williams manner, but long, hard stares.’<sup>26</sup> This is a tactic of Leonard’s to create characters whose aggressive manner intimidates others in order to illustrate how these characters feel a sense of antagonism towards others in society.

The last poem of *Six Glasgow Poems* illustrates this defensive tactic in its presentation of a marginalised character who uses violent threats to establish a sense of ‘territory’ on paper and presumably, in life. The narrator in ‘Good Style’ arranges phonetic phrases that imitate the sounds and pace of one’s voice while simultaneously making arguments about language discrimination. This poem begins with the narrator ironically addressing the reader regarding the difficulty of reading the transcribed text:

helluva hard tay read theez init  
 stull  
 if yi canny unnirston thim jiss clear aff then  
 gawn  
 get tay fuck ootma road<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Anette I. Hagan, *Urban Scots Dialect Writing* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 184.

<sup>25</sup> Hagan, p. 184.

<sup>26</sup> Mulrine, ‘The Good Thief’, p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 14.

The second stanza consists of one vocal ‘burst’ of speech liberally sprinkled with profanities, conveying the narrator’s spirited interjections to an unseen listener. In this stanza the narrator attempts to verbally spar with the reader as a way of bolstering his own confidence:

ahmaz goodiz thi lotta yiz so ah um  
 ah no whit ahm dayn  
 tellnyi  
 jiss try enny a yir fly patir wi me  
 stick thi bootnyi good style  
 so ah wull<sup>28</sup>

The use of phrases common in the Glasgow vernacular phrases such as ‘good style’ and ‘fly patir’ illustrates that *Six Glasgow Poems* contains defamiliarising language structures and a strong, if stereotypical sense of Glaswegian identity which appealed to his Scottish audience. It marked Leonard’s appearance on the Scottish literary scene and, with its first person, established his dissenting reputation, as Mulrine states: ‘his work is a proclamation that the Glasgow working-class patois has appeared on the poetic scene with all its overtones of violence and brutality, and is no more to be trifled with than its speakers are in real life.’<sup>29</sup> *Six Glasgow Poems* is also significant as it is Leonard’s first creation of marginalised voices in his work; this became a narrative hallmark carried through to later publications.

### ***A Priest Came on at Merkland Street (1970)***

Leonard’s long poem *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* contains a multi-layered exploration of alienation using fragmented presentation to explore issues of male power, entrapment, anxiety and the slow passage of time. *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* explores the thoughts of young boy who has suffered a traumatic experience. Written in a stream-of-consciousness style meant to encapsulate the young narrator’s feelings of anxiety, the poem presents sexual violence in a religious environment where power has been corrupted by a member of clergy. *Merkland Street* is another poem where Leonard has used religion as a prism through which to explore individuals suffering from feelings

---

<sup>28</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> McClure, p. 171.

of alienation, as well as for Leonard to explore how the misuse of male power in established institutions (such as the clergy) can impact a person's view of themselves. The impact of this poem lies in its exploration of the character's lack of trust in others and his sense of alienation from the church: 'Let us consider that alienation represents a sense of estrangement from other human beings, from society and its values, and from the self - particularly from those parts of the self that link it to others, and to society at large.'<sup>30</sup> One can posit a relationship between Leonard's disclosure in 2005 that he was sexually abused at age twelve and confessed the incident to a priest on the same night, but ultimately did not receive 'solace' from the priest's words,<sup>31</sup> and *Merkland Street*'s mentions of 'you and I in the dark' and the priest's 'horrible leering face'.<sup>32</sup>

Written in short brisk lines which follow each other in a long tight column, one of the critical objections to *Merkland Street* was its stream-of-consciousness presentation and the jumbled appearance of its short, brief lines. The poem can be faulted for failing to ground the reader in the setting or fully explain what is happening to the narrator, as it begins abruptly in the present-tense and continues on an unclear narrative path with words which do not effectively describe the situation or characters:

oh no  
 holy buttons  
 sad but dignified  
 and sitting straight across from me  
 a troubled soul  
 my son<sup>33</sup>

The absence of a grounding narrative was an issue in an anonymous review of *Poems* in the *Times Literary Supplement* which was dismissive of this long poem's value. Having compared Leonard unfavourably to two other poets, the reviewer felt further compelled to write:

Some of the potential pitfalls of Mr. Andrew's methods are graphically revealed in Tom Leonard's Poems. The centrepiece of this collection of trivia, 'A Priest Came On At Merkland Street' [sic] is a rambling assortment of disjointed banalities,

---

<sup>30</sup> Oken, p. 84.

<sup>31</sup> McLaughlin, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 28.

wrapped up in a style from which every drop of vitality has been remorselessly squeezed out.<sup>34</sup>

However, this review also does not recognise that *Merkland Street* presents a sexual violence in a religious environment where a vulnerable individual has been violated by a member of the clergy. The ‘rambling assortment of disjointed banalities’ that the reviewer objected to is the stream of consciousness style through which Leonard chose to convey the growing anxiety of the narrator.

The cream-coloured pamphlet continues the paper-based, hand-crafted mode of Leonard’s previous works. First published in 1970, a thousand copies were printed by Tom McGrath’s Midnight Press and the first twenty were signed by the author.<sup>35</sup> The cream-coloured cover features a map of the Glasgow subway. Circling the title *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street*, the hand-drawn map includes the stations: Merkland Street, Partick Cross, Hillhead, Kelvinbridge, Saint George’s Cross, Cowcaddens, Buchanan Street, Saint Enoch, Bridge Street, West Street, Shields Road, Kinning Park, Cessnock, Copland Road, Govan Cross. Though crudely hand-drawn, the subway map is representative of the poem’s habit of repeating significant lines ‘hello there’.<sup>36</sup> The ‘subway’ is also connected to the poem by way of its seating arrangement: just as two riders sit opposite each other in the car, so do the priest and narrator in the poem’s imagined ‘confessional’ setting. The subway’s seating and its circular movement through the various stations adds a feeling of potential eternal entrapment.

A number of narrative devices collectively convey the painful consequences of the power imbalance between the young boy and the priest. First, though Leonard was predominantly known for his work in Glaswegian urban dialect in 1970, he chose to write the sequence in Standard English, perhaps reasoning that Standard English would be the appropriate register for interaction with clergy. In an interview Leonard spoke of the device of switching vocal registers, suggesting that the register must suit the occasion:

I suppose one of the reasons I’m interested in particular types of voices is because I have different types of voices myself. People living in a city can have different voices, particularly. Everybody has got different registers on different social

---

<sup>34</sup> Anonymous, ‘Difficult Perceptions’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 November 1973, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Tom Leonard, *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* (Glasgow: Midnight Press, 1970).

<sup>36</sup> Leonard, *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street*, p. 2 and ‘my son’, p. 3.

occasions but I think cities can throw up people who are on the crossroads of different languages.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to maintaining an appropriate register, Leonard uses short lines to convey the narrator's respiratory affliction which conveys a sense of breathless anxiety and connects physical to psychological suffering. The sequence commences with an ominous four-line epitaph on a preceding page:

a  
very thoughtful poem  
being a canonical penance  
for sufferers of psychosomatic asthma<sup>38</sup>

The narrator's asthma plays an ironic role in the sequence, as the gnomic lines immediately convey a sense of anxiety, seen here in the lines where the narrator suggests his discomfort at seeing the priest on the subway:

hello there  
when I'm dead  
when I think I'm dead  
and I'm in my box  
and it's dark<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, Leonard deploys the device of dual perspectives. *Merkland Street* intertwines the imagined (or previously spoken, and now remembered by the narrator) words of the priest and the thoughts of the young narrator. The dual-layered narratives results in split voices engaged in a (verbally) one-sided conversation:

I'll see this curtain  
and it will move to the side  
and your great horrible leering face  
how many times my son<sup>40</sup>

The reader becomes slowly aware of the narrator's discomfort as he, in a disconnected fashion, reveals an implied sexual episode between himself and the priest:

and you'll climb inside my box  
laughing

---

<sup>37</sup> Dósa, p. 75.

<sup>38</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 29.

lying together in the dark  
 innocent as hell  
 like lights after a school dormitory  
 cosy but exciting  
 and maybe God will look round the curtain  
 hello there<sup>41</sup>

The priest does not embody the fierce and insecure masculinity of Leonard's tough male characters who appear later in *Intimate Voices*, these men who act like 'cowboyz' and 'no moovna muscle'.<sup>42</sup> These men are embodiments of aggression and violence. However, Leonard in his description of the priest as a man with conveys potent maliciousness in the description of the priest as man with 'a stoop and funny eyes'.<sup>43</sup> The priest is not, as the narrator wants to imagine, 'the nicest man in the world, but a malevolent authority figure and, as the book progresses, as much of a physical threat as in the more stereotypical 'hardmen' behaviour that Leonard criticises in *Intimate Voices*.

As previously mentioned, the short lines within the long poem illustrate the narrator's oral characteristics, including his asthma and his staccato-pattern of speaking which is caused by anxiety. Spilling out in a stream of consciousness style, the short lines also aid in the poem's presentation of the (slow) passing of time. The narrator voices a clock:

tick tock  
 tick  
 oh no  
 tick tock  
 tick  
 hello there  
 tick tock  
 tick  
 hello there everybody<sup>44</sup>

The significance of the syllabic transcript is to give an impression of time. In his review of Leonard's *Poems*, Tom McGrath noted an acute awareness of time within the sequence. As McGrath stated, 'the concentration is more on each moment as it occurs, a fact which the poet tries to convey by the bareness of the typography but which the reader not used to

---

<sup>41</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 29.

<sup>42</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 58.

<sup>43</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices* p. 33.

this type of poetry might fail to pick up.’<sup>45</sup> McGrath’s view that Leonard has created ‘pointillistic’ details also comes into play in Leonard’s presentation of music.<sup>46</sup> The pamphlet also contains includes sheet music from Mahler’s Seventh Symphony, an orchestral work that Leonard references in the text:<sup>47</sup>

a bit of Mahler's Seventh might drown him  
dah dum, da dum dah dee  
dah DAH dah<sup>48</sup>

Leonard's insertions of syllabically transcribed phrases from classical music are crude interpretations of the score's musical notation, but assist the reader’s assessment of the narrator’s emotional state. The significance of Mahler's Seventh Symphony, also known as ‘the Night Song’, is Leonard's transcription of a dramatic tonal line which personifies with the narrator's hyper-anxiety.<sup>49</sup> Mahler's Seventh Symphony begins with a particularly robust rhythmic phrase, which acts a leading phrase within the text, and according to Peter Revers, the phrase has ‘an integral function and serves as a structural nucleus and generator of different thematic and/or motivic elements’. In the actual score the phrase is first played by the horn, and then with the addition of oboes, flutes, and clarinets, builds to dark and rich orchestral texture.<sup>50</sup> The syllabic transcriptions of music illustrate the narrator’s method of disassociate himself from his own train of thought by focusing on and correcting the music in his head which he feels encompasses his feelings of anxiety:

da da da DAH da da  
correction  
dah dah dah DAH da dah<sup>51</sup>

Though the poem’s understanding and depiction of the Seventh Symphony can be termed as rudimentary, its insertion alludes to the depth of the narrator's sense of panic. In terms of links to other works or additional underlying themes, Leonard's poem *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* also has links to James Thomson’s poem *A City of Dreadful Night* (1874) due to their obsession with morbidity; a characteristic which illustrates both narrator's

<sup>45</sup> Tom McGrath, ‘Tom Leonard: Man with Two Heads’, *Akros*, Volume 8. No. 24 (1974), pp. 40-49 (p. 46).

<sup>46</sup> McGrath, p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> McClure, p. 171.

<sup>48</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 28.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Revers. ‘Mahler's Seventh Symphony’ in 376-399. in *The Mahler Companion* ed. by Donald Mitchell & Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: OUP, 1999)pp. 376-399 (p.376).

<sup>50</sup> Revers, p. 392.

<sup>51</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 33.

deep internal conflicts. In 1993, Tom Leonard published a literary biography of James Thomson with a view to deconstructing the origins of *A City of Dreadful Night*. The two long poems share a preoccupation with isolation, mortality and divinity. Leonard declares that Thomson's '... intention is to explain to a select group of others the relationship between death and "death-in-life". "Death-in-life" in the poem takes place in an unnamed, gloomy city where "the sun has never visited" and 'mourners' wander 'with heavy drooping head (s)'.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, in *Merkland Street*, the narrator exhibits obsession with morbidity in this stanza where he declares intentions to die:

I am going to die  
and no button under my right arm  
I am going to die  
and no button in the back of my head<sup>53</sup>

In this poem, the narrator compares himself to a robot which has a re-set button, however the narrator has no such button and cannot be saved. The impact of this comparison between the narrator and robot means that the narrator feels he is dead already and beyond salvation. Beyond a narrator obsessed with death, *Merkland Street* and *Dreadful Night* also share a similar circular and thematic structure, incorporations of cultural allusions into their text, and a narrator who feels alienated from society due to their religious upbringing. Further discussion on *Merkland Street*'s shared characteristics with *The City of Dreadful Night* will appear in the chapter on *Places of the Mind*.<sup>54</sup>

### **Poems (1973)**

The brief selection taken from Leonard's first full collection *Poems* (1973) included in *Intimate Voices* are short poems featuring males who experience alienation, loneliness and a sense of disconnection from their surroundings. These characteristics of Leonard's narrators resonate with Rotenstreich's definition of social alienation as people who suffer from: 'loneliness, self-isolation from, or loss of contact with, others and society, as well as

---

<sup>52</sup> James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night*, ed. by Roderick Watson, Canongate Classics (Edinburgh: Canongate Press Ltd, 1993), p. 45.

<sup>53</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, pp. 27-51.



the replacement of emotional reactions and relations by a callous, mechanical attitude.’<sup>55</sup> In poems such as ‘Psychiatrist,’ ‘Storm Damage’ and ‘At the Unemployment Exchange’, Leonard creates male characters who feel a sense of detachment from their surroundings, but the reader gets a sense of their internal conflict through Leonard’s descriptions of objects in the room. In order to express the disconnection these individuals feel in their daily life, several of Leonard’s poems include particular and sometimes surreal descriptions of what the narrator sees and hears. In this manner, Leonard adopts William Carlos Williams’ narrative tactic of framing a poem within one’s sensory experience. The impact of using this technique is to subtly impart the depth of his characters’ sense of marginalisation by personifying the object to reflect how the narrator is feeling.

The simply titled *Poems* has the designation of being Leonard’s first full collection and a handful of these poems were reprinted in *Intimate Voices*. At the age of twenty-nine, Leonard published his debut collection with his father-in-law’s press in Dublin, E & T O’Brien. Leonard recounted the difficulties of selling the collection:

As there was no distributor in Scotland, I had to take it round to shops myself. It is an enlightening experience going round shops trying to sell a book called *Poems*. What I did find was that a number of shops would sell the copies then practically roll up the linoleum looking for them when you went back to get the money.<sup>56</sup>

*Poems* is a blue-coloured booklet which features a pointed, spiral graphic on the cover. The long list of publications in the acknowledgments page illustrates that by this time Leonard had acquired a respected reputation, as he lists *Scottish International*, *Akros* and *Scottish Poetry 5 & 6* as some of his publications, as well as poems broadcast on BBC Radio Three and Four.<sup>57</sup> The sequences *Six Glasgow Poems*, *Merkland Street*, 3 Pollok Posters, ‘Simile Please/Cheese’ ‘The Remark’, ‘The Psychopath’, ‘At the Employment Exchange’, ‘Psychiatrist’, ‘The Voyeur’, ‘I said’, ‘The Remark’, ‘Storm Damage’ and ‘The Appetite’ and ‘The Performance’ were included in *Intimate Voices*. Several poems did not make the transition into *Intimate Voices* including: ‘The Other Side of the Ticket’, ‘Dream’, ‘Summer’, ‘Another Sunday poem’, ‘Sweetheart’, ‘The Inner Melancholy of the Poet’,

---

<sup>55</sup> Rotenstreich, p. 78.

<sup>56</sup> Dee Sunshine, ‘What Makes Poets Tick’, <<http://www.rimbaud.org.uk/q-leonard.html>> [accessed 29 September 2010].

<sup>57</sup> Leonard, *Poems*, p. 1.

‘Phallflower’, ‘She Sells Sea Shells’, ‘Words for E’, ‘This Island Now’, ‘Soft and Strong’, ‘Honest’, ‘Landscape’, ‘Perpetual Stasis’, ‘The Image’ and ‘Full Frontal Astronauts’.

In some of these poems, Leonard uses impressionistic imagery in order to convey his character’s sense of disconnection from his environment. He articulates this sense of an individual’s estrangement from their surroundings by inserting particular, or impressionistic, images which, in their melancholy description, personify the narrator’s sense of sadness and detachment. The description, selection and locality of the image is crucial to the understanding of the poem; this view is supported by in the essay ‘The Locust Tree in Flower’, Leonard pointed out that it is the recognition of individual detail of an ordinary object which is the strength of Williams’ Imagist poetry: ‘Certainly a sizeable proportion of Williams’ work describes trees and plants and scenes that link sky, ground, and the wind; but it’s the invocation to rescue the specific from a general context that seems to me important here.’<sup>58</sup> The rescuing of the ‘specific’ from a general context gives a sense of the individual’s specific mindset.

Leonard too, extracts what is specific from a general context in order to better convey his characters’ sense of estrangement. This intention can be seen in the poem ‘Psychiatrist’ where an unwilling and uncooperative patient refuses to engage with his therapist during a session. Instead of speaking openly with his therapist, the character’s ‘eyes are sidling round the room’, which would explain the narrator’s mental ‘stock take’ of the objects in the room. The power struggle between the therapist and narrator is seen in the narrator’s decision to name the chair, the clock as objects, as certain ‘truths’ while the therapist replies with the loaded analysis: ‘Women are a threat to your security’:

My eyes are sidling round the room  
The clock is a clock. Full stop.  
The chair is a chair.  
Full stop.  
Everything’s heavy – the sunlight’s far too warm.

An eyebrow shifts  
‘Women are a threat to your security,’  
He says.  
His eyes finger me.

---

<sup>58</sup> Leonard, ‘The New Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams’, *Edinburgh Review*, 85 (1990), pp. 62-71 (p. 65).

But my eyes are sidling round the room<sup>59</sup>

In this poem it is Leonard's slightly surreal description of the sunlight as being 'far too warm' – a metaphor for feeling pressure to talk – which encapsulates the narrator's sense of pressure and feeling of estrangement from the situation. A similar technique is demonstrated in the poem 'Storm Damage' which, in its minimal-action narrative describes how seemingly innocuous images can trigger flashbacks. 'Storm Damage', with its emphasis on 'damage', is a present-tense poem which uses the narrator's 'sensory experience' as a means to convey the depth of his conflict. The use of 'sensory experience' in William Carlos Williams' work is described by Carl Rapp as one of Williams' objectives in his poems to describe 'with great accuracy and intensity, the poet's sensory experiences'. Through selective and sagely observed imagery, the poem must recreate and project onto the reader what the narrator was thinking and feeling in a specific moment. As Rapp states, 'the more successful the projection of the heart into the object, the more adequate the object as a term of expression.'<sup>60</sup> In 'Storm Damage', the narrator is in a intimate position with another person in bed and sees a stain behind his partner's head. The projection of the narrator's anxiety is seen in the description of a damp stain on the ceiling:

There is a stain on the ceiling above the bed.  
Rainwater. A relic of last year's storm.  
It is roughly circular. Darkest at the centre,  
The perimeter is not clearly defined.

The narrator's description of the stain as 'roughly circular. Darkest at the centre. /The perimeter is not clearly defined' illustrates the narrator's hazy memory, the 'dark' depth of his emotions and the varying degrees of negative emotions associated with the event. The dark stain can also be seen as a metaphor for another's shadow and serves as a psychological 'flashback' to a particular day. This is seen in the third stanza:

My mind goes back twelve years.  
I am a child again, lying in the grass,  
Staring into the sky. Eclipse.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> Rapp, p. 90.

<sup>61</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 25.

Like *Merkland Street*, the poem hints at a childhood episode of sexual abuse through its use of the word 'eclipse', a metaphor which signifies the movement of his partner's head, but reminds the narrator light extinguished by the movement of another person's head, possibly an attacker. The individualised description of the stain imparts a sense of the narrator's sense of being detached, or estranged, from his present situation and preoccupied with an earlier memory.

*Poems* contains early and underdeveloped work which hints at his interests in expressing a sense of melancholy surrounding young men. One can argue that Leonard, as an editor of his own work, has selected work from *Poems* which he feels chime with the cultural critique of the working-class accent in *Intimate Voices*. The selection process of 'Psychiatrist,' 'Storm Damage' and 'At the Unemployment Exchange' as well as a few other poems out of a bigger body of work is a similar process to Leonard's selective rounding of the poets alienated by poverty, politics, gender and sexuality in his anthology of Renfrewshire writers: *Radical Renfrew*. Leonard's selective editorial processes which will be discussed in the next chapter on *Radical Renfrew*.

### ***Bunnit Husslin (1975)***

In *Bunnit Husslin*, Leonard creates a series of stereotypical male speakers whose vocal utterances explore their own view of their working-class position in society. These fictive personas created by Leonard include the marginalised voices of violent 'hardmen' and the ordinary working-class male who struggles to articulate his feelings to others due to feelings of low self-confidence. The use of urban phonetic dialect in these short monologues which describe the characters' social and cultural experiences is a method by which Leonard critiques the relationship between the language, power and class status; specifically making the point that those who speak in working-class language wield less power in society and may seek to reclaim a sense of empowerment through violence or threatening language. Leonard's poems can be termed as stereotypical in content, as they explore aspects of patriarchal masculinity: football, religion, sex, homophobia and urban violence. Leonard's satirical focus on violence and sexual masculinity reflects the cultural

stigma of the working-class accent and how marginalised individuals reclaim a sense of power in light of this cultural stigma.

*Bunnit Husslin* was published in Glasgow in 1975 and the bulk of the pamphlet reappears in *Intimate Voices*. The hand-drawn cover is presented as a comic strip panel. Two stick figures speak to each other in word bubbles, which evoke the pamphlet's presentation of oral characteristics. The first stick figure states the title in large capital letters: 'BUNNIT HUSSLIN'. The other responds in standard English: 'You mean deliberately purveying a cloth-cap image?' The cartoon and title is an alliterative and ironic phrase which hints at Leonard's presentation of Glasgow stereotypes in order to reflect society's opinions of working-class voices and culture. In his presentation of Glasgow's subculture, *Bunnit Husslin* sits firmly in the culture of Scottish literature at the time. Leonard's focus on religion, football and violent masculinity is shared with the narrative fiction of Glasgow writers like William McIlvanney. Reilly states that 'Though himself a Catholic, William McIlvanney is the direct descendent of Irish Catholics who fled the famine [...]' and his novel *Docherty* bears 'all the stigamata of an intense personal experience [...]'; an observation which chimes Leonard's use of Catholicism as a prism to comment on working-class values. The publication of *Bunnit Husslin* coincided with *Docherty* which describes the struggles of a Glaswegian working-class miner and his family. McIlvanney describes the violence of women in most married households: 'Some of the folklore of High Street concerned the martyrdom of women: wife-beatings, wages drunk on the journey between the pit-head and the house, a child born into a room where its father lay stupefied with beer.'<sup>62</sup> Like some of Leonard's characters, Tam Docherty is also in conflict with his Catholic consciousness. He explores what the word means to him: 'It had been in his thoughts as long as he could remember. Whatever misery, anger, bitterness, despair had come to him, it had still been vaguely containable in the folds of that loose word, to be thawed to a sort of comfort.'<sup>63</sup> However, the men in *Bunnit Husslin* may sometimes share Docherty's Catholic background but they do not share his sense of Catholicism to have a 'thawing' or 'comforting' effect; instead the religious teachings of 'sex and the body confuse them, as seen in the poem 'Hardmen' which will be discussed later:

---

<sup>62</sup> William McIlvanney, *Docherty* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1975), p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> McIlvanney, p. 46.

no sumhm

see Calvinism  
 see Catholicism  
 shame a thi body  
 sex<sup>64</sup>

In his poems about Glasgow hardmen, Leonard deconstructs a specific group of men who express a feeling of being displaced through acts of violence. It can be argued that Leonard's fixation with hardmen has a close relationship with his earlier poems about victimisation; perhaps becoming a 'hardman' is the result of earlier trauma, seen in the religious poem *Merkland Street* where the narrator imagines himself and the priest: 'lying together in the dark / innocent as hell.'<sup>65</sup> Colin Milton links male violence to religion's repressive attitudes towards sex: 'Often religious conditioning arrests emotional growth and disports sexual development' and Leonard's hardmen 'refers to a specifically west of Scotland male subculture of swagger, violence and criminal activity.'<sup>66</sup>

The simply titled poem 'Hardmen' is written from the point of view of a narrator observing other outsiders. Speaking in urban phonetic dialect, the narrator describes the hardmen's qualities to an unknown listener. Akin to Leonard's exploration of the interrelations between language and class, in this poem Leonard also questions Protestant and Catholic attitudes to sex and the body, noting that the sectarian divide is united in disgust for one's flesh:

noa sumhn  
  
 see Calvinism  
 see Catholicism  
 shame a thi body  
  
 sex<sup>67</sup>

The narrator in the poem deconstructs the hardmen's anti-social behaviour with a mixed sense of admiration and loathing. The poem states how the hardmen contrive a sense of

---

<sup>64</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 58.

<sup>65</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> Milton, 'Dialects, Orality, and The Poetry of Tom Leonard', p. 602.

<sup>67</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 58.

power from ‘aw this bevvyn’ and ‘aw this hardman stuff’ yet also points out that these actions stem from a sense of fear and weakness:

aw this bevvyn  
aw this hardmen stuff  
still tiedty their mithers  
straight up<sup>68</sup>

It is significant in this poem that Leonard presents and links two groups who are marginalised in society: both the violent hardmen and gay males. In the poem, the ‘hardmen’ call gay males ‘arsebandits’ and the poem suggests that these hardmen are even hiding a homosexual secret, as the poem closes with the a warning ‘noa suhmn / watcher baws’<sup>69</sup>:

n they aw hate queerz  
arsebandits they caw thim  
thi wan thing they canny stand  
poofs

geeyi a tip sun  
fyirvir stucknithi dezert  
stuckwia Glasweejin  
a hardman

noa sumthin  
watcha balls<sup>70</sup>

In this poem Leonard flags the hardmen's attitude towards gay males to point out how individuals transfer their aggression onto others as a means of bolstering their own confidence. Any possibility of redemption through violence, however, disappears in the poem ‘No Light’ which is an account of the beating up a ‘dead posh’ man who fails to provide a match for his three assailants. This is a reversal of the language prejudice which is Leonard’s usual concern; instead of the lower-class being attacked, the three men heedlessly attack a stranger for sounding upper-class:

“i’ve not got a light,”  
hi says, dead posh  
so a looksit wullie

---

<sup>68</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p.58

<sup>69</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 58.

<sup>70</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 58

an wullie looksit jimmy  
 an jimmy looksit me  
 n wi aw starts laffn<sup>71</sup>

‘No Light’ here also references what Reilly refers to as a complete absence of remorse or awareness but ‘simply the bare statement of capture: “thi morra wir gawn up thi hull”.’<sup>72</sup> Leonard seems to suggest that giving a voice to those who are alienated from genteel society is not necessarily a means to redemption.

Leonard also presents idealised examples of male sexuality in *Bunnit Husslin* in order to criticise how men objectify women in order to bolster their own confidence. This is shown in the crude humour of ‘Pffff’, a poem whose visual presentation of a tight vertical column is a reflection of its exploration of male sexuality. In the poem, two narrators undress a girl mentally while observing her on the street, and eventually realises she is of school age. Leonard continues to criticise masculine identity through exaggerated sexual activity, especially evident when the poem reaches a fictive climax:

pffff  
       middla Sucky Hall Street  
       fucking big hard dawn  
       nearly shot ma load

pffff  
       its no right thaht naw  
       naw its no right thaht  
  
       bluddy blaizur oanur tay  
       stullit fuckin skool<sup>73</sup>

Leonard’s critical assessment of these men is echoed in the penultimate stanza in the lines ‘its no right that naw.’ In the same pamphlet, Leonard also deconstructs the working-class experience of feeling alienated from a sense of outward achievement due to an absence of confidence. The poem ‘The Qualification’ features a commonplace and unimaginative conversation between a mother and son. The mother speaks for her son, and lectures him on his inability to focus and lack of practical application. The short monologue in urban

---

<sup>71</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 59.

<sup>72</sup> Reilly, *Catholics and Scottish Leonard*, p. 189 & Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 59.

<sup>73</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 56.



phonetic dialect is ironic in the repetition of 'clivir' written in urban phonetic dialect, long thought to be an undesirable mode of speech:

well jiss take a lookit yirsell  
 naither wurk nur wahnt  
 aw aye  
  
 yir clivir  
 damn clivir  
 but yi huvny a clue whutyir dayn <sup>74</sup>

*Bunnit Husslin* follows *Six Glasgow Poems* in its critique of the working-class experiences of cultural perceptions of language and users of those Glasgow patois in society. Through his presentations of stereotypes of 'hardmen', and young men with little confidence, Leonard criticises the cultural experiences of the working-classes, the cultural assumptions that work against an undervalued and the inability of language to express one's feelings fully.

### ***Three Glasgow Writers (1976)***

Tom Leonard released the pamphlet *Three Glasgow Writers* (1976) together with Alex Hamilton and James Kelman. It focused on their personas as Glasgow writers committed to writing in urban phonetic dialect and presenting working-class voices. In this pamphlet, Leonard shows how text written in urban phonetic dialect can be seen as an 'alienating structure' in his discussion of reader, text and authorship in his short story 'Honest'. Leonard's other contribution was a sequence which discusses power relations between culture, media and speakers of Glasgow dialect in 'Unrelated Incidents.'

'Honest' is a significant piece in Leonard's oeuvre as it allows the author to ruminate on the importance of writing and why he has chosen to write in phonetic dialect. As Edwin Morgan stated: 'Leonard presents the classic triple search of a young Glasgow writer for theme, language and audience.'<sup>75</sup> In his selections, 'Honest' presents the sense of alienation that occurs in text when the writer feels separated from a sense of audience due

---

<sup>74</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 51.

<sup>75</sup> Morgan, p. 206.

to the presentation of visually enigmatic speech, or does not feel confident that others would want to read about his experience. The narrator, speaking directly to the reader in a lengthy monologue, discusses the narrative possibilities of writing about a fisherman, but then realises that the point of writing is self-expression: ‘But a suppose underneath everythin, thi only person ah want ti write about, iz *me*. It’s about time ah wrote sumhm about masell! But whut?’<sup>76</sup> The narrator questions how he should ‘spell out’ his own voice. The option of whether or not the narrator should write the way he speaks is in question: ‘Course, they never say “Doon thi road” or “Down the road” at all. Least, they never say it the way it’s spelt. Cos it izny spelt, when they say it, is it?’<sup>77</sup> There is an element of irony present in the text as the reader has witnessed the narrator expressing himself.

As a poetry sequence, ‘Unrelated Incidents’ is a cultural critique of the reception and stigmas attached to the Glasgow working-class accent and points out the social faced by its speakers. In the first poem of the sequence Leonard mocks the low cultural opinion of the Glasgow accent and language not fit for serious topics such as ‘love and science’:

its thi lang-  
wij a thi  
guhtr thaht hi  
said its thi  
langwij a  
thi guhtr

awright fur  
funny stuff  
ur  
Stanley Bax-  
ter ur but  
luv n science  
n thaht naw<sup>78</sup>

Leonard then reverses the semantic expectations of the poem by illustrating how Glasgow humour can be incidentally humorous not by the accent itself, but by the addition of a humorous event. Manipulating the poem's textual properties to create an abrupt and

---

<sup>76</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 72.

<sup>77</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 73.

<sup>78</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 86.

dramatic ending, Leonard creates an impactful parallel by subverting the expectations of the accent and still making a humorous point:

fit boldly n  
 fell eight  
 storeys  
 doon thi  
 empty  
 lift-shaft<sup>79</sup>

Similarly, Leonard manipulates the poem's textual properties as a written and creative space in order to make further arguments about the cultural reception of the working-class accent. The third poem of 'Unrelated Incidents' is a linguistic power struggle and features a BBC presenter claiming that he speaks in an upper-class register though the text is written in Glaswegian. The poem is a challenging, phonetically transcribed language structure which points out the cultural relationship between the Glasgow accent and the media. The appearance of a mode of speech which is normally deemed culturally unfit for the media, but presented from a media 'outlet', creates irony in the presentation:

... if  
 a toktaboot  
 thi trooth  
 lik wanna yoo  
 scruff yi  
 widny think  
 it wuz troo.  
 jist wanna yoo  
 scruff tokn  
 thirza right  
 way ti spell  
 ana right way  
 to tok it ...<sup>80</sup>

McClure speaks of the poem's underlying linguistic mission: 'the third exposes the fact (well established as such by socio-linguistic experiments) that the perceived authoritativeness of a speaker's utterances varies with the degree of prestige attached to his accent.'<sup>81</sup> McClure calls the poem 'self-contradictory' because the prestigious statement is

---

<sup>79</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 86.

<sup>80</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 88.

<sup>81</sup> McClure, p. 174.

‘now being mentally heard as spoken with the accent of “scruff”.’<sup>82</sup> Leonard exposes the traits associated with a Received Pronunciation voice by presenting it in urban phonetic dialect. The poem uncovers a ‘class voice’, illustrating the ‘circumstances’ and ‘interests’ of the upper class. It evokes a close relationship between form and content, since the narrow structure of the poem resembles a teleprompt.<sup>83</sup> Though Didac Pujol argues that ‘polyphonic hybridity’ is present in this poem – the co-presence of two dialects in the same sentence (that of Glaswegian urban phonetic dialect and Received Pronunciation) – that is a problematic notion, as it is only the tone and attitude of the upper class in this poem, and not the actual RP dialect.<sup>84</sup> Leonard meant the poem to be self-contradictory but also searing in its presentation and politicisation of both the oral and the written. He discusses the he states in an interview uploaded on YouTube:

I mean, in my news poem, the guy doesn’t say, or rather, he is not reported as saying ‘scruff’ three times unintentionally. The word scruff means ‘you down there’, it doesn’t mean ‘you ‘other’ or we can’t stand the people over the hill, it means you down there with the valueless language. Everybody when they speak is within a whole social thing. And that applies to print as well. It’s within a whole social thing<sup>85</sup>

‘The whole social thing’ is the hierarchal positions of vocal registers apparent in the media and in the news. In both ‘Honest’ and ‘Unrelated Incidents’ Leonard presents and deconstructs aspects of language prejudice in both the visual appearance and content of the text.

### ***Ghostie Men* (1980)**

*Ghostie Men* (1980) is the final pamphlet included in *Intimate Voices*. Like the previous pamphlets, *Ghostie Men* is a cultural critique of working-class experiences rendered in political phonetic dialect. In this sequence Leonard moves from discussing the subculture of Glasgow to the critiquing the attitudes towards language and power in family structures and the work place. The sequences’ short verses, generous amount of white space on the

---

<sup>82</sup> McClure, p. 174.

<sup>83</sup> Milton, p. 575.

<sup>84</sup> Pujol, p. 173.

<sup>85</sup> Leonard, ‘Tom Leonard on language and social status’,  
<[www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyGjoVIVG88&list=UUxoXbPR3mjvx](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyGjoVIVG88&list=UUxoXbPR3mjvx)> [accessed 10 September 2012].

page and flowing structure where one poem builds upon the next, bears visual and formal similarities to the poetic sequences Leonard includes in later collections, namely *nora's place* and 'situations theoretical and contemporary'. The comparison reveals Leonard's penchant for writing sequences which incrementally allude to a greater theme.

Published in 1980, the blue, speckled cover illustrates two men marrying a woman shaded in white and this cover design by Robin Campbell perhaps illustrates the pamphlet's theme of traditional spaces.<sup>86</sup> Of the sequence, J. Derrick McClure states that the poems contain the sound of 'the urban underclass' in poems that 'abound in multi-layered ironies, contain an irreducible hard core of satire directed at – in sum – the fashionable attitudes of people equipped with knowledge they fail to realise is irrelevant.'<sup>87</sup> In the poems featuring the position of language in the workplace, Leonard asks for consideration from others of various registers. In the poem which begins 'ah knew a linguist wance', the narrator realises that he must 'shift ma register' when speaking to her. However, he asks the linguist to respect 'the extra-semantic kinetics /uv the fukin poor'.<sup>88</sup> Leonard's demand for consideration of nuances of one's language is also illustrated in a later poem entitled 'Four Conceptual Poems', where one poem ironically asks, 'In what ways do extra-verbal kinetics affect class-accent communications?'<sup>89</sup>

Leonard subverts other pre-established modes of language by inverting nursery rhymes, replacing childish innocence with an aggressive refocusing on the patriarchy of church and state. In an ironic manner, he reworks simple songs into ominous chants. For instance, he turns the last stanza of 'Baa baa black sheep' from a gentle offering to a menacing obligation:

one for thi master  
n anuthir wan fur thi master  
n wan fur thi fuckin church<sup>90</sup>

These darkly humorous samplings of nursery rhymes simultaneously turn them into expressions of angry alienation from prevailing power structures. The same playful manner

---

<sup>86</sup> Tom Leonard, *Ghostie Men* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1981).

<sup>87</sup> McClure, p. 174.

<sup>88</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 113.

<sup>89</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 123.

<sup>90</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 112.

in the service of a critique of power recurs in the poem ‘ma langwij is disgraceful’. The narrator recounts all the people who have told him that he speaks disrespectfully, including the members of his family: ‘ma wife tellt me jist-tay-get-inty-this-poem tellt mi /ma wainz came hame from school an tellt mi’. Unlike the previous poems in which Leonard discusses language, he does not close the poem threatening the reader. Instead, the narrator has now the confidence to decide for himself that: ‘ach well / all livin language is sacred / fuck thi lohta thim’,<sup>91</sup> which the narrator sees as a small sense of achievement for the working-classes. This poem illustrates that there is a separate language for home and for the outside world, and the narrator refuses to change his register when expected.

### **String Quartet in D minor, Op. 56 Voces Intimae (Intimate Voices)**

In each of the pamphlets or books comprising *Intimate Voices*, one can witness small shifts in their form, context and their function as a critique of the cultural experiences of the working-classes. From the aggressive and ironic monologues of religious individuals in *Six Glasgow Poems*, to the sexual violence of *Merkland Street*, to the stereotypical hardmen in *Bunnit Husslin*, the linguistically powerful ‘Unrelated Incidents’, and the exploration of the working-class voice in domestic and professional settings in ‘Ghostie Men’, Leonard builds a critique of cultural assumptions of the working-class accent in society. As Colin Milton argues, Leonard's poems in Glaswegian dialect challenge what Leonard sees as ‘a linguistic and aesthetic hegemony: the stance and voice of the dominant canonical tradition is one which marginalises other stances and other kinds of voice – particularly oppositional ones.’<sup>92</sup> Leonard's interest in the social assumptions of language has allowed him to create consistent representations of marginalised individuals and question the impact of the power relations between language and class in society.

This chapter concludes with an exploration of the title of the collection, *Intimate Voices*, a tribute to Jean Sibelius' String Quartet in D minor op. 56 for two violins, viola

---

<sup>91</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 123.

<sup>92</sup> Milton, p. 585.

and cello.<sup>93</sup> Written in 1909 when Sibelius was forty-four, and lasting twenty-eight minutes, the quartet consists of five movements: Andante – Allegro molto moderato, Vivace, Adagio di molto, Allegretto ma pesante and Allegro. The score celebrates the singular sound of each of the quartet instruments — double violins, viola and cello — by constructing on the linear movement of each of the instruments in turn. As Daniel Miller states 'Even the unison at the start of the Allegro molto moderato (measure 9) is fundamentally linear: every voice gains a high degree of linear individuality.' Each of instruments plays a short theme individually until the eighth bar, when all four instruments come in together at allegro molto moderato.

It can be argued that Leonard evokes a rudimentary comparison of the musical score in his cover of *Intimate Voices* which syllabically anatomises the phrase 'in the beginning was the word' to 'in the beginning was the sound'. This Symphony's instrumental transitory movement and incremental building to full volume is illustrated in Leonard's gradual metamorphosis and incremental transcription of the Biblical phrase 'In the beginning was the word' to the syllabic and phonetically led term 'nthibignningwuzthisound'. Leonard's concentration on sound in speech becomes a cultural critique of the assumptions of the working-class accent. As Milton has noted: 'Sound is primary, and speech is the fundamentally creative language-activity; despite its superior prestige in literate societies, writing is ultimately dependent, even parasitic, upon the spoken word.'<sup>94</sup> The next chapter takes his introduction into speech and sound into in his as Leonard compiles an anthology selecting those who have been socially alienated politically, culturally, or by gender or class. It examines the ways in which Leonard explores the topic of alienation in his anthology: *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War*.

---

<sup>93</sup> Sibelius, Jean, String Quartet in D minor op. 56, first written 1909  
<[http://imslp.org/wiki/String\\_Quartet\\_%E2%80%98Voces\\_intimae%E2%80%99,\\_Op.56\\_\(Sibelius,\\_Jean\)>](http://imslp.org/wiki/String_Quartet_%E2%80%98Voces_intimae%E2%80%99,_Op.56_(Sibelius,_Jean)>)  
[accessed 10 September 2012].

<sup>94</sup> Milton, 'Dialects, Orality and the Poetry of Tom Leonard', p. 600.

## Chapter Two: *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War*

The previous chapter on *Intimate Voices* argued that Leonard explored social alienation primarily amongst Glasgow males in terms of religion, class and language. This chapter examines his anthologising methods in *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War* (1990). It argues that Leonard presents the writing of figures alienated by poverty, gender and sexuality as much as he presents poems which explore political radicalism, and it analyses Leonard's role as an anthologist as he interweaves his idealised learning practices and views on canon-formation into the structure and content of *Radical Renfrew*. This anthology was compiled while Leonard was writer-in-residence at the Paisley Central Library during the years 1988-1990. Leonard used Robert Brown's *Paisley Poets* (1889) as a general content guide and William Motherwell's *The Harp of Renfrewshire* (1820), which, as this chapter will argue, placed Leonard's concern with politics in perspective. Leonard states that 'Radical Renfrew takes the locality of Renfrewshire in the West of Scotland, and presents a literary excavation of the poetry of the period 1789-1914.'<sup>1</sup> The anthology contains a selection of sixty-eight writers: sixty-two men and six women and is preceded by an introductory essay in which Leonard opposes his own view of canonicity which, he argues, is defined by the treatment of culture as property and the way poetry is taught in schools.

Leonard's use of the term 'radical' in the anthology is contestable. One could argue that Leonard is using the original fourteenth-century adjectival definition of 'radical' as 'of, relating to, or proceeding from a root', in so far as he gathered neglected or forgotten poetry which expresses what he believes is at the root, or heart, of being human.<sup>2</sup> According to Paul McLaughlin, 'radical' in the fourteenth century described 'that which pertained to the root, essence, basis, or foundation of something or somebody: a vital

---

<sup>1</sup> Leonard, 'Main Publications' <<http://www.tomleonard.co.uk/18-main-publications/main-publications-sp828/7-radical-renfrew.html> [accessed 19 September 2014]

<sup>2</sup> *Webster New Collegiate Dictionary* (Toronto: Thomas Allen & Son, 1975), p. 566.



principle, a defining attribute, an original cause, and so on.’<sup>3</sup> However, Leonard also uses ‘radicalism’ in the sense of political reform. As McLaughlin states:

It was only from the eighteenth century that the adjective was used to describe political or social change or action (and associated beliefs) of the same kind: originally, in the late-eighteenth century and early-nineteenth century, basic and significant political or social reform; somewhat later, especially from the mid-nineteenth century, even more fundamental political or social transformation (or revolution). Such change (and its associated beliefs) was originally understood to be of a democratic and /socialistic nature.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter argues that political radicalism informs only a part of the anthology. In fact, Leonard’s selection is much broader and, cumulatively, suggests that the ‘fundamental root’ or ‘defining attribute’ of the human spirit is a sense of alienation. This chimes with Rotenstreich’s view of social alienation: ‘A person is alienated from society when he feels or believes that he cannot fulfil in society that which, according to his conviction, is his rightful role and place in it. A person is alienated from society since society is alienated from him.’<sup>5</sup> The biographies of poets and the content of poems in *Radical Renfrew* highlight language, poverty, gender, class, religion, mental illness, physical distance or sexual orientation as expressions of this separation between an individual’s sense of identity and the reality of his or her place in society.

In *Radical Renfrew* Leonard provides a thematic guide to the anthology, which includes topics of ‘religion’, ‘alcohol’ and ‘unemployment’. A comparison of *Radical Renfrew* to *Intimate Voices* is included in this chapter in order to explore Leonard’s continued projection of stereotypical West of Scotland characteristics, which strengthens the author’s established persona as an acerbic exponent of ‘working-class culture’. Comparisons to other anthologies that concentrate on local or dialect voices, such as Tom Paulin’s *The Faber Book of Vernacular Verse* (1990) and William Douglas’s *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (1986), demonstrate Leonard’s unique approach to retrieving particular literary outsiders. This chapter also argues that *Radical Renfrew* contains another agenda; that of interweaving Leonard’s idealised learning practices and views on canon-formation into the structure and content of *Radical Renfrew*. The idea of culture as property is explored in the introduction to *Radical Renfrew* and in the essay

<sup>3</sup> Paul McLaughlin, *Radicalism: A Philosophical Study* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> McLaughlin, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Rotenstreich, p. 79.

‘Poetry, Schools and Place’, both of which will be examined here.<sup>6</sup> Leonard’s attempt to rescue writers alienated from educational and literary establishments is built around a document which emphasises the relationship between geography and author. Leonard claims that he selected poets who ‘either lived in the County of Renfrewshire ... or spent a period of their life there’.<sup>7</sup> However, Leonard was also prepared to include figures such as Marion Bernstein and James Thomson who did not strictly meet these geographical requirements but completed his hinterland of approved alienated writers.

The chapter identifies manifestations of the editor in the text and supports the argument that the anthology has been constructed to reflect Leonard's own interests in radicalism in both senses: political activism and social alienation as a defining attribute of the human spirit. It examines how Leonard, in careful selections from forerunner anthologies *Paisley Poets* and *Songs of Renfrewshire*, has discreetly conveyed the message that Renfrewshire poetry was a hotbed of radical politics while still managing to include poets alienated from society for other reasons. Poetry with domestic and rural themes, which characterises much of Renfrewshire writing at the time, was not included in the anthology or the many women poets who drew on these themes in their work. Finally, this chapter will examine the ways in which Leonard as anthologist devised his collection. Anthologising has not been the subject of comprehensive study in Scottish literature and it helps to look to other traditions for close analysis of the genre. In *The Anthology in Jewish Literature* (2004), David Stern remarks that the anthology is neglected in general literary studies and that when there is literary discussion of anthologising ‘it is almost exclusively for its significance for canon formation.’<sup>8</sup> He argues that ‘no anthological organisation is devoid of an ideological consideration’ and that the anthologist should be considered as ‘a literary agent and presence in his own right.’<sup>9</sup> By entitling his anthology *Radical Renfrew*, Leonard appears to put his ‘ideological consideration’ to the fore while defining his group by geographical boundaries. However, his inclusions were not always strictly defined by politics and, when viewed in their entirety, gather around the term ‘alienation’ which Leonard’s literary agency defines. This methodology contrasts with his forerunner William

---

<sup>6</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, pp. 13-20.

<sup>7</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>8</sup> David Stern, *The Anthology in Jewish Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press 2004), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Stern, pp. 5-7.

Motherwell who laid claim to Tory civic authority in his political life but, this chapter will argue, attempted to set aside ideological considerations in his anthologising process.

### ***Radical Renfrew and Intimate Voices***

The anthology has a crucial place in the arc of Leonard's career as it continues Leonard's established reputation as a critic of working-class issues. In an interview with Ken Cockburn, Leonard stated: 'If you hold *Radical Renfrew* up to the light at the front of the cave ... you'll find it makes the same shadows as the back of *Intimate Voices*, if you try the same trick.'<sup>10</sup> These metaphorical 'shadows' suggest that Leonard saw *Radical Renfrew* as the close cousin to *Intimate Voices*. Despite the fact that *Radical Renfrew* is an anthology of the work of others and *Intimate Voices* is a collection of Leonard's own work, they can indeed be seen as natural companions. Both books concentrate heavily on the voices of marginalised men, and present a number of long-established working-class issues which, as previously mentioned, are some of the thematic categories in the *Radical Renfrew* index.<sup>11</sup> These subjects are also present in the poems of *Intimate Voices*, which feature the voices of Glasgow's hardmen, the unemployed, and football supporters.<sup>12</sup> Critics such as Eleanor Bell make the narrative connection between the two collections. She praised Leonard's commitment to 'representing working-class voices' which, she argues, would 'otherwise be absent from the canon'.<sup>13</sup> Leonard's utilisation and inclusion of phonetic dialect connects both books – Glaswegian urban dialect in *Intimate Voices* and Scots and Renfrewshire dialect in *Radical Renfrew* – demonstrating his belief that independence and individuality can be articulated through artistic representations of one's oral speech. The works are linked by the presentation of a multitude of the marginalised and alienated, the empowerment of phonetic dialect and the notion that such speech is a valid artistic medium.

<sup>10</sup> Ken Cockburn, 'Tom Leonard Interviewed by Ken Cockburn', *Verse*, 8 (1994), pp. 62-66 (p. 65).

<sup>11</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. xxxvii-xxxix.

<sup>12</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, pp. 55-59.

<sup>13</sup> Eleanor Bell, 'Old Country, New Dreams: Scottish Poetry Since the 1970s', in *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, Volume 3 Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)* ed. by Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 185-197 (p. 187).

### Critical Reception for *Radical Renfrew*

Few critics of *Radical Renfrew* have noted the degree of personal agency that informs the anthology. Upon its publication and in subsequent mentions in critical texts, both academic critics and journal reviewers were positive about *Radical Renfrew*. It was widely accepted that Leonard successfully unearthed a buried area of literature, the significance of which no one previously recognised nor bothered to categorise. In *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry*, Colin Nicholson views Tom Leonard's anthology as a personal, familiar endeavour where he collects writers like himself:

As it exercises the contemporary relevance of cultural retrieval, *Radical Renfrew* rescues local voices from the condescension of posterity partly because 'the sound of nothingness' that A.L. Kennedy called the 'huge invisible silent roar of all the people who are too small to record' was for Leonard a family experience.<sup>14</sup>

Nicholson also concludes that Leonard's interest in language was the driving force behind the anthology: 'With his anthology of largely forgotten nineteenth-century west-of-Scotland writers Leonard extends his sense of speech as the birthplace of intersubjectivity, the grounding of community and the origin of history.'<sup>15</sup> George Gunn saw Leonard's work as a testimony to the depth and endurance of Scottish literature:

What has not been lost, thanks to Tom Leonard, Renfrew District Libraries and Polygon Publishing, are these vibrant texts. Leonard's work in the poetry of Renfrew, alongside that of William Donaldson in 19th century Scot prose fiction, proves that Scotland's literature is a radically deeper and more popularly lasting thing that those who rule us would have us believe.<sup>16</sup>

Leonard was also praised for his efforts in locating specific persons such as Marion Bernstein, a little known feminist poet. Duncan Glen stated: 'Tom Leonard's more recent researches have revealed other minor Renfrewshire poets, including the radical feminist Marion Bernstein who was writing in the mid 1870s.'<sup>17</sup> Her discovery was also significant for women in the arts, as theatre critic Joyce McMillan wrote: 'And Leonard has unearthed at least one name – that of Marion Bernstein, a nineteenth century woman poet and

---

<sup>14</sup> Colin Nicholson, 'Nomadic Subjects in Recent Poetry', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry* ed. by Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 80-96 (p. 91).

<sup>15</sup> Nicholson, p. 91.

<sup>16</sup> George Gunn, 'An Unvanquishable Number', *Chapman* No. 61-62, Autumn (1990), 184-185 (p. 184)

<sup>17</sup> Duncan Glen, *Scottish Literature: A New History from 1299 to 1999* (Kirkcaldy: Akros Publications, 1999), p. 104

columnist of a lively, feminist cast of mind.’<sup>18</sup> Edited by Edward H. Cohen, Anne R. Fertig and Linda Fleming, Bernstein’s collected works were published in 2013 as *A Song of Glasgow Town* (2013).<sup>19</sup> In an article entitled ‘Glasgow’s Forgotten Feminist’, Zoe Strachan credited Leonard with ‘saving her from obscurity’.<sup>20</sup> Leonard had to widen the borders of Renfrewshire to include her into the anthology and the inclusion of Bernstein as a feminist figure was part of Leonard’s radical and political vision for *Radical Renfrew*.

### ***Radical Renfrew and the regional voice revival***

Leonard’s distinctive approach to anthologising in *Radical Renfrew* can be flagged up initially by comparing it to other regional-based anthologies published during a regional voice revival from the 1980s onwards. A number of anthologies were published which featured literature from supposedly marginalised poets based within Scotland or beyond. *Radical Renfrew* has been compared with anthologies such as Tom Paulin’s *The Faber Book of Vernacular Verse* (1990) and the work of William Donaldson, the anthologist and compiler of books such as *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (1986) and *The Language of the People: Scots prose from the Victorian revival* (1989). Issues such as regionality, language, politics and literature were thematic concerns in all these anthologies. The anthologists explored commonality between their selected poets and how poets find a sense of ‘home’ in a shared language, common stylistics, a collective region, or in a shared time. Leonard’s anthology is broadly similar to other ‘regional voice’ anthologies in timing, principle and purpose. However, Leonard’s politicised focus on localised, and sometimes marginalised and neglected poets has no direct match in any of the various anthologies that were produced during the 1990s, despite the desire of some critics to locate similarities.

For instance, Leonard’s container of nineteenth-century Renfrewshire poets contrasts with Tom Paulin’s wide-ranging book of international and canonically approved

---

<sup>18</sup> McMillan, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Marion Bernstein, *A Song For Glasgow Town*, edited by Edward H. Cohen, Anne R. Fertig and Linda Fleming (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literature Press, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Zoe Strachan, ‘Glasgow’s Forgotten Feminist’, *Scottish Review of Books*, Vol. 9 Issue 4 (2014), 10.

poets writing in American, English or Scots vernacular, entitled *The Faber Book of Vernacular Verse* (1994).<sup>21</sup> C.J. Fox reviews both Leonard's and Paulin's anthologies in *PN Review* and finds similarities in the anthologists' language attitudes:

The current rebellion is a two-pronged pro-vernacular affair, the work of anthologists (usually a peaceful breed) not to all appearances acting in conspiratory partnership though with matching forenames to bear out their common intent.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the similar key words of 'vernacular' and 'radical' in the authors' respective titles, the two anthologies are poles apart in terms of the reputations of their contributors. Despite Paulin's claim that he was creating a canon of voices which reject 'the imposed, normative official voice', his anthology is a selection of popular and already canonised voices.<sup>23</sup> His roster of poets includes celebrated writers such as Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Robert Burns, D.H. Lawrence, Blake Morrison and Gerard Manley Hopkins. In the introduction, Paulin claims his anthology was inspired by his appreciation for the complexities and metaphorical qualities of localised speech. Those who reject predominant language attitudes, he argued, are those who compose in the voice of their community, and this has the ability strike a chord of intimacy with a reader. Paulin attempts to separate the terms 'dialect' from the term 'vernacular', stating that 'dialect' is a term which 'works to marginalise regional speech and privilege Standard English. Vernacular is a term used in sociolinguistics to refer to 'the indigenous language or dialect of a speech community.'<sup>24</sup> This linguistic difference however, has little impact on Paulin's choices of writers. Though Paulin stated that the poets he selected are the ones who write freely in the vernacular and are thus rendered 'powerless' and 'disaffected' due to their linguistic choices, such debilitating terms can only be partially applied to poets such as Whitman, Rossetti, Frost and Dickinson.<sup>25</sup> Paulin's selections from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' (1862) and Robert Burns' 'To a Mouse' (1785) illustrate his attempts to entice the reader into a sense of the marginalised, leading to the belief that these poets who are widely studied could be seen as unpopular and 'disaffected'. Paulin does include Gerard Manley Hopkins who, it can be argued, was both powerless and disaffected during his life time and Leonard includes Robert Tannahill who was well-

<sup>21</sup> Paulin, Tom, ed., *The Faber Book of Vernacular Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Fox, C.J., 'Poetry and its Discontents', *P. N. Review*, Vol. 17 No. 4 (1991), pp. 78-79.

<sup>23</sup> Paulin, p. xvi.

<sup>24</sup> Paulin, p. xi.

<sup>25</sup> Paulin, p. xxii.

known during his lifetime and Alexander Wilson who achieved considerable fame in North America, albeit as an ornithologist rather than a poet. However, the majority of Leonard's selected poets are virtually unknown, out of print and working class and were either born in the County of Renfrewshire or lived close to that region.

Anthologist William Donaldson has also been offered up as a natural pairing with Leonard in light of his editorial inclination and commitment to Scotland's history, language and locality. The first paragraph of a chapter on nineteenth-century Scottish poetry insists on their commonality:

William Donaldson and Tom Leonard have made considerable advances in subverting and reclaiming hitherto neglected literary sources, and in identifying a history of critical bias. Donaldson's *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (1986) and its companion volume of prose excerpts *The Literature of Scotland* (1989), together with Leonard's *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War* create a new appreciation for the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

Donaldson and Leonard have both mapped a history of ephemeral written mediums and have successfully navigated forgotten prose and poetry. While Leonard has examined poetry pamphlets and anthologies, Donaldson used newspapers to provide evidence of relationships between class structure, written materials and language attitudes. Similarities can be found in Donaldson's and Leonard's treatment of location, history and language attitudes and in the equally passionate introductions, both of which aim to subvert previous notions of language use. Donaldson concluded that despite the dominant belief that the balance of the nineteenth century following Scott's death was a 'period of decline and failure', literary strength lay in 'popular culture' and the largest book trade was the Scottish newspaper press. After a search through newspapers, journals and periodicals in the nineteenth century, Donaldson concluded that Scots was used commonly and 'we must seriously revise our view of Scots as a medium of written communication in the period since the Reformation.' Donaldson presents what he terms as 'evidence' that there was a 'major vernacular revival' in the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Leonard in turn claims evidence of a radical strain in the poetry of weavers, workmen and women and concludes that there was a previously neglected area of political literature in Renfrewshire. However, key

---

<sup>26</sup> Douglas Gifford, Sarah Dunnigan, and Alan MacGillivray, 'James Young Geddes, John Davidson, and Scottish Poetry', in *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 349.

<sup>27</sup> Donaldson, p. 1.

differences arise in their descriptions of process in their introductions which impacts the critical reception of the text and the historical authenticity of the anthology. Donaldson is candid about the problems he encountered reviewing the material as well as his assessment that he is only able to provide partial evidence of the book trade. In the introduction, he describes problems of mass material and difficulty in tracking articles. He states that ‘two hundred separate titles were appearing every week in Scotland’ and ‘to these considerations of scale must be added the obscurity of the original source material.’ Furthermore, ‘newspapers present a number of additional problems not always encountered in other fields. The source material is scattered and sometimes inaccessible.’<sup>28</sup> Donaldson adds: ‘[... ] The densely compact character of the text makes extended reading taxing from a physical and psychological point of view.’<sup>29</sup> These are Donaldson’s imperatives for being ‘selective’ though he lists all thirty-seven newspapers that he samples. By comparison, Leonard does not admit to difficulties in his description of his selection process and gives the impression that *Radical Renfrew* broadly represents the literary culture of a particular place and time. In fact, he focuses quite narrowly on political radicalism and various forms of alienation when making his selection.

### ***Radical Renfrew* as a vehicle of canonical reclamation and reinvention**

While Leonard’s anthologising in *Radical Renfrew* finds no exact equivalent in the other regional voice anthologies which followed, the basis of his distinctiveness lies in his views concerning canonical reclamation and corrective procedures which he outlines in the introductory essay in *Radical Renfrew*. This ensures that the anthology is not strictly a historical document but one where historical writings are structurally manipulated in order to form a specific argument about alienation, class and language. Leonard has repeatedly stated ways in which he believes writers become alienated from the established literary canon. ‘Literature’, he argues, is seen as the cultural property of educated elite; ‘canon’ is class-based and defined by literature taught in schools; and literature should be contextualised in its own history. In the introduction to *Radical Renfrew*, Leonard returns to constructed notions of value in literature. His four markers of examination literature

---

<sup>28</sup> Donaldson, p. x.

<sup>29</sup> Donaldson, p. xi.



negatively assess live or ‘real’ literature; poems are only ‘real’ if they are chosen by an English teacher and poems require official ‘interpretation’ from said English teacher. These last two requirements describe the manufactured concept behind what is considered the ‘best’ literature: the ‘best’ poems will be found in exams, and only those who understand these poems will do well in these exams.<sup>30</sup>

Leonard considers these applications and principles an affront to art, especially his own. In the essay ‘Poetry, Schools, Place’ Leonard presents what he considers ‘the basis of our society’, his personal economic equation of ‘object = property = commodity’. To illustrate how the study of literature in schools has become equal to economic property exchange, he fuses the word ‘human’ onto the equation, pointing out a transfer of responsibility: ‘human = object = human’, which Leonard refers to as the relationship between writing and reader. Leonard believes that writer and reader should be connected not through the quantitative evaluation of the exam, but through the transformative powers of the text.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Leonard believes that educational establishments should have a stronger relationship to the local environment. Though a legitimate argument, his statement concerning schools and locality feels conveniently related to the structure of *Radical Renfrew*. He states:

I would like it if teachers in schools were somehow taught, or were required to find out, the application of their particular discipline to the particular locality in which they teach. I mean that the school itself should be in fact a centre of local learning and information about the ground on which teachers and pupils walk, what was on it before the school and the surrounding houses were built, and what the people in that particular locality did, wrote and made as far back as the history of that locality can be traced.<sup>32</sup>

In the anthology, Leonard creates a minor literature in an attempt to deterritorialise the Renfrewshire language from the ‘best’ literature as selected by schools and interpreted by teachers. He creates a consciousness of working-class life that was once deemed unsuitable for literature and, through his use of biographical and chronological details, defines the anthology into a historical document. Leonard’s construction of a ‘minor literature’ mirrors the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari who identify three significant aspects in the term: the delineation of a minor literature from the major language, a significant political

<sup>30</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>31</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 26.

dimension and a collective group value. As they explain, ‘A minor literature does not come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language.’<sup>33</sup> The Renfrewshire dialect utilised in *Radical Renfrew* is demarcated from the Scots language and, though the anthology contains a range of linguistic presentation, the vernacular is an element of collective identity. Leonard reacts to his own argument about educational canonicity by initially appearing to create a document rooted in locality and history. In addition to a historically rooted local literature in schools, Leonard contends that students should have the democratic freedom to choose for themselves what they would like to read. He believes that the only place where this particular freedom exists is in the public library, and Leonard has structured the thematic table of contents in *Radical Renfrew* to resemble the structure of a library. Leonard gives his readers the option ‘to look in one “dip” at how some common themes are differently treated, and how the treatment developed over the period of time covered by the anthology’, notes such a device’s ‘practical value’ and argues that this creates an existential, equal encounter between literature and reader, as the reader is able to choose for himself what he would like to read.<sup>34</sup>

### **Manifestations of the editor: *Radical Renfrew*, *The Harp of Renfrewshire* and *Paisley Poets***

Having made a case against prevailing notions of the literary canon and literature as property in his introduction, Leonard turns his attention to retrieving neglected Renfrew poets, following the lines of his own argument. However, Leonard is now a ‘canon former’ himself. Stern states that the most discussed aspect of anthology has been its role ‘as a medium of canonization, its service in authorizing, sacralizing and legitimating certain works and in marginalizing, delegitimizing and anthemizing others.’<sup>35</sup> In the face of such weighty responsibility, Leonard remains unusually discreet about his methodology. In the introduction to *Radical Renfrew* he reveals that:

---

<sup>33</sup> Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari: *new mappings in politics, philosophy, and culture*. ‘What is a minor literature’, ed. by Eleanor Kaufman & Kevin Jon Heller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>35</sup> Stern, p. 7.

I didn't have any particular plan in mind when I started on this anthology, not in the sense of trying to look for specific themes. Certainly whenever I came on a biographical reference that would say something like 'Unfortunately his poems of this period show his extreme radical views' I would be on the lookout for that poet's poems during the period referred to. But in general that was not my way of doing things.<sup>36</sup>

The only other indication of Leonard's anthologising process seems to have been in a little-known interview conducted in America and published in *Variant* magazine some years later. Leonard admitted that he 'rejected a hell of a lot' and refused to include poems which 'used grand-toned language' and embodied a 'salon-pastoral suit'.<sup>37</sup> In fact, Leonard's anthologising process began at source with his collection of material from the two volumes of *The Harp of Renfrewshire* and two volumes of Robert Brown's *Paisley Poets* found in Paisley Central Library. The material that Leonard extracts from these two volumes, and the ways in which he manoeuvres and manipulates it, is key to understanding the anthology he eventually created. In the introduction to *Radical Renfrew*, Leonard mentions *The Harp of Renfrewshire*, but says nothing about Motherwell or his anthologising methodology. In fact, both Motherwell's life and his approach to the selection process make for a fruitful comparison with Leonard's concerns. Motherwell served as the sheriff-clerk-depute of Renfrewshire from 1819 to 1829 and Hamish Whyte states that, 'As a youth he had entertained radical political views, but unpleasant personal relations with reformers—and particularly an incident in which, while he was carrying out his official duties, a mob nearly threw him into the River Cart—transformed him into a zealous tory.' His Tory credentials were further enhanced when he became editor of the *Glasgow Courier* in 1830 and used the position to campaign against political reform. Motherwell was also heavily involved in the Orange Order and was appointed district master of the Glasgow Lodges in 1833. Whyte notes Motherwell's lack of any appreciable ties with Ireland and presumes that 'his extreme conservative views caused him to view that movement almost romantically, as a bastion of social order.'<sup>38</sup> Motherwell's anti-radical credentials were unlikely to appeal to Leonard. However, as Mary Ellen Brown has pointed out, Motherwell may have been a political conservative, but he was also a 'cultural nationalist' who

<sup>36</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. xxxiv.

<sup>37</sup> Dan Stephen, 'Talking to Tom Leonard', < [www.variant.co.uk](http://www.variant.co.uk) > [accessed 31 October 2012].

<sup>38</sup> Hamish Whyte, 'Motherwell, William (1797–1835)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19419>> [accessed 22 Aug 2015]

collected ballads as evidence of distinct Scottish culture and a ‘regional apologist’.<sup>39</sup> The first volume of *The Harp of Renfrewshire* is an eclectic essay on ‘The Poets of Renfrewshire’ who ‘have neither been few in respect of number, nor contemptible in regard to merit.’<sup>40</sup> Later in the essay, Motherwell states that ‘nothing is a more palpable than moulding the Scottish language into English forms of spelling, and nothing can be more absurd, since thereby its true pronunciation is inevitably lost ...’<sup>41</sup> This respect for language and locality suggests a partial rapprochement with Leonard’s position, but Motherwell’s anthologising methodology contrasts markedly with Leonard’s prescriptive approach. Whyte describes Motherwell’s editorial principles as being ‘remarkably forward-looking’ and credits him with opposing ‘editorial tampering and refining, seeing them as “pernicious and disingenuous practices” which destroyed authenticity.’<sup>42</sup> Further, W.F.H. Nicolaisen suggests that Motherwell’s Tory principles ‘also governed his attitude towards the collection and editing of ballads—i.e., an underlying conservatism and aversion to change’ and adds that ‘these apparently antiquarian principles make him, from our point of view, a very “modern” ballad editor ... [who]... insists on printing ballad texts without “improvements” or other editorial emendations.’<sup>43</sup>

In the preface to *The Harp of Renfrewshire*, the ‘editors and publishers’ explain that they have presented ‘two hundred and seventy-five pieces; seventy-four of which – no inconsiderable proportion – are original.’<sup>44</sup> There is little content overlap between Motherwell’s anthology and Leonard’s, but when it occurs it is instructive. Leonard’s biography of Alexander Wilson, for instance, stresses the poet’s radical credentials in Scotland and focuses on the time he spent in prison as a result of the publication of his poems ‘The Hollander’ and ‘The Shark’. The first poem attacked silk manufacturer William Henry ‘for the cheating of weavers by charging them for discrepancies in the weight and holes made by himself in the cloth.’<sup>45</sup> Similarly, ‘The Shark’ attacked Paisley manufacturer William Sharp for ‘cheating by altering his machinery to make returned

---

<sup>39</sup> Mary Ellen Brown, *William Motherwell's Cultural Politics 1797-1835* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001, p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> Motherwell, p.ix.

<sup>41</sup> Motherwell, p. xxvii.

<sup>42</sup> Whyte, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> W. F. H. Nicolaisen, ‘William Motherwell's Cultural Politics, 1797-1835’, *Journal of American Folklore*, Volume 117, Number 464 (Spring 2004) pp. 222-223 (222).

<sup>44</sup> Motherwell, p. iv.

<sup>45</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 8.

weavers' work seem smaller than it was.'<sup>46</sup> Both poems are reproduced in Leonard's selection. In his Wilson biography, Leonard also quotes two verses from 'The Aristocrat's War-Whoop', a satirical work which mocks the British monarchical and class systems which was written by Wilson after he emigrated and suggests that his radical politics were not forgotten in America. Motherwell, by contrast, attempts to explain Wilson's radical inclinations as resulting from a general societal fever allied to certain personal circumstances. Wilson's political sentiments 'had their share in adding to his unhappiness'.<sup>47</sup> He was 'Enthusiastic in his love of liberty at a time when all were somewhat fanatic on the same subject, the fervour of the poet's imagination distorted and magnified the visible shape of national events beyond their true and just proportions...'<sup>48</sup> Motherwell makes no mention of Wilson's repeated imprisonments and suggests hurt feelings as an additional reason for his emigration after a poem was taken from him and 'burned at the market-place of his own town.'<sup>49</sup> Despite his reservations about Wilson's political views, Motherwell writes with extreme sympathy concerning his life in America and ability as a poet. He characterises the poem 'Watty and Meg' as '...the very best thing of its kind ever written',<sup>50</sup> and the wide selection of Wilson's work that is reproduced in *The Harp of Renfrewshire* ensured his legacy.

Both Leonard and Motherwell include Robert Tannahill in their anthologies and here their approaches have more in common. Leonard identifies Tannahill as following his father's occupation of weaver but, unlike Alexander Wilson, does not identify any radical inclinations in Tannahill. Instead his biography contains a brief overview of his career as a poet and songwriter but then focuses on his humility, poverty, depression and ultimate suicide. Motherwell too initially focuses on Tannahill's suicide, though unlike Leonard he does not describe the details of its commission. He states that 'We are at all times inclined to look with a fearful shuddering on the man who closes the Book of Life on himself', but in Tannahill's case 'moral or religious feeling have but slender influence' in view of the poet's amiable, unassuming, innocent and kind personality.<sup>51</sup> The positive assessment of Tannahill's personality is not quite matched by Motherwell's view of his abilities. He finds

---

<sup>46</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Motherwell, p. xxix.

<sup>48</sup> Motherwell, p. xxix.

<sup>49</sup> Motherwell, p. xxix.

<sup>50</sup> Motherwell, p. xxx.

<sup>51</sup> Motherwell, p. xxxii.

Wilson his superior in areas other than song writing<sup>52</sup> and concludes that ‘On the whole, we believe his poetical character to have been over-rated and that sympathy for his fate has so associated itself with his many excellencies that while we endeavour to estimate his merits as a poet our feelings have more to say in the matter than our judgement.’<sup>53</sup>

Comparing Leonard’s anthologising methodology to Motherwell’s point up aspects of Leonard’s selection process that applies throughout *Radical Renfrew*. In the case of Wilson, Motherwell objected to his radical politics and attempted to contextualise them, but the greater focus was on his abilities as a poet. Leonard’s more prescriptive approach concentrated on the poet’s radical credentials which were the focus of his biography of Wilson and influenced the selection of his poetry that was included in his anthology. However, neither anthologist identified any radical element in Tannahill’s life or poetry and Leonard concentrated instead on issues that alienated the poet from society including his impoverishment, personal unhappiness and the details surrounding his suicide. These two anthologising themes – radical politics and personal alienation –recur throughout *Radical Renfrew*.

This can be demonstrated by comparing Leonard’s anthology to Robert Brown’s *Paisley Poets* which, in terms of content, can be seen as *Radical Renfrew*’s ‘main forerunner’.<sup>54</sup> Brown, a resident of Paisley, compiled the two volumes in 1889 with the intention of celebrating Paisley’s reputation for gifted bards. According to Brown, it was common knowledge in town that ‘every fifth person in Paisley is a poet.’ Brown includes succinct biographies of each of his poets where he describes their occupation and literary achievements just as Leonard did, though the latter sometimes extended or diminished the biographies for reasons that will be discussed later. Leonard, as mentioned, occasionally took liberties with boundaries, but generally adhered to Brown’s inclusion of poets who were ‘either natives of Paisley or residents in our town for some considerable time.’<sup>55</sup>

*Paisley Poets* can still be viewed as the original blueprint for *Radical Renfrew* in terms of structural design. However, typographical mistakes and a lack of acknowledgement characterises the relationship between the two texts. In his introduction,

---

<sup>52</sup> Motherwell, p. xxx.

<sup>53</sup> Motherwell, p. xiii.

<sup>54</sup> Leonard, p. xiv.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, p. x.

Leonard erroneously calls Robert Brown ‘David Brown’, despite his contention that *Paisley Poets* can be considered as ‘a main forerunner’ to *Radical Renfrew* and the fact that it was the source of much of Leonard’s biographical content. Leonard lifted fifty-five out of the sixty-eight poets in *Radical Renfrew* from *Paisley Poets* and some of his poet biographies are pared-down revisions of Brown’s. No other acknowledgement is made to link the two texts other than, perhaps, a backhanded one. Leonard dates his introduction as November 1988 and Robert Brown’s introduction in the first volume of *Paisley Poets* was written a hundred years before, in November 1889.<sup>56</sup>

The comparison with Motherwell’s anthology suggested that Leonard envisioned *Radical Renfrew* as a gathering of political radicals and alienated figures and this section of the chapter will argue that this also explains why Brown and Leonard are opposites on the spectrum in terms of the anthology’s essential binaries of rural/urban themes, and political/domestic content. Leonard’s rejection of poems that ‘used grand-toned language’ and embodied a ‘salon-pastoral suit’ clashed with the depictions of rural lifestyles and pastoral themes that were considered integral to other minor poets in the nineteenth century.<sup>57</sup> Brown emphasised country themes in his collected poets, suggesting that these poets work hard at ‘depicting in musical language our hills, glens, water-falls, linns, heathery braes, flowery dales and warbling birds.’<sup>58</sup> In his introduction, Brown states that the poets of Paisley identify strongly through their regional landscape. He tells the reader to ‘form his own opinion’ of the works but to keep in mind ‘that every word and line of these numerous effusions, depicting in musical language our hills, glens, water-falls, linns, heathery braes, flowery dales, and warbling birds ... have only been put into song after much reading, close observation, great thoughtfulness, and keen mental application.’<sup>59</sup> In contrast, Leonard includes a small selection of nature-themed works under the heading ‘Nature and country’; the third last heading in his selection of categories. In *Radical Renfrew*, trade unions and employment are the major themes in the work due to Leonard’s preoccupation with locating poems which explore urban and working-class issues, radicalism and alienation.

---

<sup>56</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. xxxiv.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen, ‘Talking to Tom Leonard’ [accessed 31 October 2012].

<sup>58</sup> Brown, p. x.

<sup>59</sup> Brown, p. x.

Brown and Leonard also differ in terms of anthology boundaries. Whereas Leonard's *Radical Renfrew* is limited to seventy entries, Brown aimed to include as many poets as possible in order to establish Paisley as a rich literary community. Brown makes the point that when he commenced his 'labour of love', he meant to only compile a single volume. However, 'the number of Paisley poets is so great – extending upwards to 220 – that justice to my subject has rendered a second volume a necessity.'<sup>60</sup> The anthologists' differing approaches, even accounting for the time available to them which was much less in Leonard's case, illustrates that the editors set out with different agendas – one informational and historical, the other political. Unlike *Radical Renfrew*, the structure of *Paisley Poets* is not primarily concerned with the dialogic relationships between literature, language and the politics of the time. It would be inaccurate to suggest that Brown ignores the political strife that some of his weaver-poets endured, but it is clear that this is not his priority and there is no wider discussion of individual radicalism. The treatment of Alexander Wilson, who has space in both *Paisley Poets* and *Radical Renfrew*, is indicative of different anthologising approaches as it was with Motherwell's *The Harp of Renfrewshire*. Brown and Leonard begin with different selections of his poetry. Brown opens with the popular favourite 'Watty and Meg' while Leonard selects Wilson's 'Hollander'. As noted in the comparison with Motherwell's selection, some of the poets that Leonard includes have no history of active political radicalism and others have no radical content or voice in their poems. In the early part of the anthology 'radical views' informs the majority of selections, but, as the anthology progresses, an increasing number of selections manifest a range of alienated conditions such as poverty, alcoholism and distance which attract Leonard's attention even though they are not necessarily related to radicalism.

Radical politics, however, is the common anthologising element in the early entries in *Radical Renfrew*. Many of the poets are persecuted weavers and amongst the poems in these early selections are John Robertson's 'The Toon Meal Pock', Alexander Wilson's 'Hollander', 'William Finlayson's 'Weaver's Lament on the Failure of the Celebrated Strike of Weaving, for Minimum of Wages, in 1812' and James Yool's 'The Rise and Progress of Oppression'.<sup>61</sup> In his review of *Radical Renfrew*, George Gunn comments that

---

<sup>60</sup> Brown, p. xi.

<sup>61</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. 5-7.



‘It was a tough assignment being working-class, Irish, a woman, in nineteenth century Renfrew. Even for John Robertson, lower-middle class, things were tight.’<sup>62</sup> Gunn quotes Robertson’s ‘The Toon Meal Pock’ as an example of an authentic expression of working-class concerns. Gunn quotes a verse: ‘For wark and want but ill agree/ Wi’ a hinging toom meal pock, and sing, oh waes me!’<sup>63</sup> In *Radical Renfrew*, Leonard follows his brief description of Robertson’s suicide with ‘The Toon Meal Pock’, connecting Robertson’s suicide and his song of woe.<sup>64</sup> Leonard also highlights the use of poetry as social commentary. He chooses a single poem by young weaver William Wilson, ‘Lines on Looking at the Picture of a King’. This poem decries a loss of democracy and the false valorisation of the monarchy, noting that kings hold ‘A power by heaven and earth condemn’d / a power invented by the devil himself.’<sup>65</sup> He also selects poems used as a medium of public vilification of authority in a number of entries. Perhaps the socio-critical awareness of these poems appealed to Leonard, whose own essays and poems also contain an acerbic touch when directed towards ‘authority’. In the case of William Finlayson who wrote ‘The Weaver’s Lament,’ Leonard emphasises the significance of the poet’s literary contribution to history. Leonard’s commentary on Finlayson’s own life is only three lines long, noting that the poet ‘was secretary to the weavers’ union sometime after 1810. In 1822 he became an exciseman and worked as such for fifty years. He died in Leith in 1872, aged eighty-six.’ In contrast, Leonard’s history of Finlayson’s ‘The Weaver’s Lament’ is a detailed summary of how the weavers union’ tried to halt magistrates’ attempts to drive wages down, leading to the weavers’ strikes and the Combination Act in Scotland, which made ‘secret oaths’ and strikes illegal.<sup>66</sup> Leonard’s objective of presenting poems aimed at political change also becomes apparent early in the anthology, with political songs followed closely by the works of political activists. James Yool’s ‘The Rise and Progress of Oppression’ is a prime example. Dedicated to ‘the weavers’, the poem describes a collapsed weavers’ strike where the strikers were put in jail and fined.<sup>67</sup> The poem begins with a strident tone: ‘I’ll tell without a swither; / your servant, most fervent / by trade’s a

---

<sup>62</sup> Gunn, p.184.

<sup>63</sup> Gunn, p. 185.

<sup>64</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 118.

<sup>66</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 57.

<sup>67</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 57.

weaving brither'.<sup>68</sup> Leonard, however, does not always insist on a political angle. There is striking contrast between his second and third poet. Alexander Wilson, as mentioned, qualifies through the political content of his poetry. Leonard includes seven poems by Wilson and extends him a five- page biography which includes his early life as a pedlar, connection to Thomas Paine, his migration to the United States and his visit to the Falls of Paterson which later inspired a poem by William Carlos Williams, an acknowledged influence on Leonard.<sup>69</sup>

Leonard's highlighting of satirical work like that of Alexander Wilson can be seen as constructive and liberating, but poets whose occupations or lives gave them less cause to complain are often excluded. Alexander Wallace, for instance, was in *Paisley Poets* but not in *Radical Renfrew*. Wallace was from an impoverished Paisley background but became a well-educated scholar, church minister and award-winning poet. He studied at Paisley Grammar School and Glasgow University, where he won in 1839 the 'Annual Prize Poem in the Logic class' with 'The pyramids'.<sup>70</sup> This 'prize' poem was published in a separate volume in 1841. Wallace was also a celebrated theology lecturer, and published a number of lectures under the title of 'Bible and the Working Classes'. It may be that Leonard felt that Wallace's presence as a 'character' in *Radical Renfrew* was not needed, considering that he already included lyrical verse from James Maxwell who was a weaver, pedlar and schoolteacher who wrote moral and religious verse. Certainly Wallace's romanticised verse on the pyramids – 'Ye stand like everlasting hills: your age / Is shrouded in the misty veil of time' did not fit into Leonard's preference for including working-class experiences, social alienation and radical politics.<sup>71</sup> However, neither would Maxwell's 'The Divine Origin of Poetry Asserted and Approved' which is included in *Radical Renfrew*. The absence of celebrity in Maxwell's background and his years as a weaver may have been what merited his inclusion.

As the anthology progresses, Leonard's selections include poets who were alienated from society due to personal poverty. In 'Epitaph', for instance, poet W.C. Cameron reviews the life of Jamie Bruckleb---s who dies 'Wi' naething on but the shirt'.

---

<sup>68</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 64.

<sup>69</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. 8-32.

<sup>70</sup> Brown, p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> Brown, p. 10.

Leonard may also have been attracted to the poem by a note that was made by Brown concerning another of Cameron's poems. Brown described 'Jamieson's Ghost' as 'A curious poem – queer ideas – written by a fireman in Backhall Factory – a course fellow is the author'.<sup>72</sup> Certainly the poverty of Jamie Bruckleb---s' situation mirrored the real lives of some of Leonard's Renfrew poets. For instance, Leonard includes a song by David Webster 'AIR: Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair'. In the biographical note reproduced by Leonard in the text, Brown says of Webster that 'He was fond of company, and frequently, with his companions he joined in the public-house, indulged to excess. I remember seeing him more than once in a very bad condition on the street, with scarcely a coat on his back.'<sup>73</sup> Leonard includes a number of poets who are alienated from others by distance, though their personal circumstances are sometimes propitious. Alexander McLachlan, for instance, was born in Johnstone and migrated to Canada where he worked as a lecturer and emigration agent. McLachlan was celebrated as the 'Burns of Canada' and widely published and reviewed there, though Leonard indicates no awareness of that. In fact, McLachlan was a life-long Chartist whose poems often contained working-class themes and was occasionally subject to derisive commentary by Canada's literary elite. Instead of investigating this aspect of McLachlan's poetry, Leonard reprints a poem called 'The Log Cabin' which celebrates Canada's vast geography in exacting couplets.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, John Barr was an engineer who went to New Zealand. Barr's 'There's Nae Place Like Otago Yet'<sup>75</sup> celebrates the relative egalitarianism of New Zealand compared to his homeland and echoes similar sentiments found in McLachlan's 'Young Canada, or Jack's as Good's his Master'.<sup>76</sup> These poems are balanced by Malcolm Ferguson's 'The Emigrant's Warning' though Leonard may have included him primarily because of 'an interesting detail' on line twelve concerning the clearances of Aborigines from Queensland.<sup>77</sup> Again, William Kennedy was British Consul at Galveston and Leonard includes a poem written by him which suggests some ambivalence in the lines 'They say I'm now in Freedom's Land/Where all men masters be'.<sup>78</sup> Beyond a few standard

<sup>72</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 180.

<sup>73</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>74</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. 236-237.

<sup>75</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 229.

<sup>76</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 238.

<sup>77</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 324.

<sup>78</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p.186.

reflections on equality, there is little that can be described as radical in Leonard's emigrant poets, and where it did exist, he failed to exemplify it in his selections.

Leonard's vision of alienated writers also meant that others who have made positive and significant contributions to literary Paisley are excluded. One such person is *Paisley Poets* contributor Dr. James Muir. Born in Kilmarnock in 1775, Muir studied to be a doctor at the University of Edinburgh and later settled in Paisley. Muir wrote a biography of Robert Tannahill and was said by Robert Brown to have possessed 'a cultured mind, and wrote a great deal of prose and poetry, and was also a good painter.' Muir also published volumes of poetry including 'Home', a collection of 354 Spenserian stanzas. Leonard may have considered Muir's apolitical approach as well as his openly religious poetry as reasons to exclude him: 'Annihilation! gloomy power / Whose awful reign the wicked hail, / We deprecate the direful hour, / If nothing shall o'er al prevail'.<sup>79</sup> The most striking aspect of Leonard's selection of religious poets, however, is his preference for religious dissenters. Robert Pollok studied in the Divinity Hall of the United Secession Church in Glasgow and wrote a book on the Covenanters. Leonard includes a section from Pollok's *The Course of Time* (1827) even though it was widely read throughout the country and 'was seen as his masterpiece'.<sup>80</sup> Charles Marshall left the Established Church at the disruption and has three poems included by Leonard mostly concerned with the evils of alcohol.<sup>81</sup>

The most obvious absence from *Radical Renfrew* is poetry with rural and domestic content and, consequently, the many women poets who favoured these themes. Leonard generally ignores poems which present rural and domestic traditions. By contrast, *Paisley Poets* contains a strong pastoral convention. Brown considers the regional landscape to be a significant part of the literary history of Paisley. He recalls the purpose of these poets as:

narrating the heroic deeds and achievements of our people, the loves of their brave sons and beautiful daughters, their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, triumphs and failures, and all their musings on this many-sided world of ours, have only been put into song after much reading, close observation, great thoughtfulness and keen mental application.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Brown, pp. 104-109.

<sup>80</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 103.

<sup>81</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 199.

<sup>82</sup> Brown, p. x

Leonard's anthologising, however, has him include only rural poems which describe the locality of Paisley, or present a specific and occasionally negative experience of nature. Leonard's short section on rural poems, 'Nature and the Country', contains subheadings called 'approving /or romantic', 'necessary fresh air' and 'unromantic'.<sup>83</sup> The 'approving/romantic' poems include works by Robert Tannahill, Alexander Smith, Hugh Macdonald and William Sharp. It is ironic that Leonard categorizes these poems under 'romantic' when in fact, what they share is a distinct lack of sentimentality. Leonard has chosen poems which do not celebrate nature in general, but positively comment on a specific visual aspect of nature. The poet sometimes anthropologically transfers his emotions to the physical landscape. This is apparent in Tannahill's 'Lang Syne's, Behind the Woodbank' where the mournful lover is in the war, and in their 'wonted haunts' she identifies with the 'weeping willow'.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, William Sharp's 'Moonrise-November' conveys the narrator's own vision of hopeful change in the rising 'green-yellow moon'.<sup>85</sup> Manifestations of the editor's priorities again appear in the subheadings. This is evident, for instance, in the subheading 'necessary fresh air', which comes across as a random aspect and sets nature in an obligatory but somewhat negative context. It recalls a poster poem of Leonard's entitled 'Pollok Poster', in which the narrator describes the questionable tranquillity of the outdoors: 'the grass full of daisies / sweat on my forehead / an insect on my arm'.<sup>86</sup> Leonard's inclusion of 'unromantic' country poems includes Alexander Wilson's 'The Insulted Peddler' and Patrick Magill's 'Padding it'. 'The Insulted Peddler' does not focus on the country in great detail; the term 'country' only describes its current setting. Rather, the poem depicts a dispute about property rights between a peddler and a property manager in local dialect and is full of bloody images and representations of the radical political philosophy that Leonard promotes. Similarly, Magill's 'Padding it' owes its origins to his packman experience and describes the cruelty of nature in the raw, concluding that 'The nearer you go to nature, the further you get from God.'<sup>87</sup>

Leonard's attachment to unromantic nature is, in turn, related to a characteristic of *Radical Renfrew* that has not previously been noted: his construction of a feminist tradition

<sup>83</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. xli.

<sup>84</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>85</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 341.

<sup>86</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 362.

which overlooks the domestic and pastoral content of the majority of female poets. Of the seventy entries featured in *Radical Renfrew*, Leonard included only six female poets:

Joanna Picken, Marion Bernstein, Margaret Thomson Laird, Mary Pyper, Jessie Russell and Anon (Isabel). Four of these are listed in his thematic guide under 'Feminist'.

Leonard's inclusion of feminist poets such as Marion Bernstein allows *Radical Renfrew* to appear inclusive and sensitive to women's rights, and to set women's rights at par with the radical protests of the weavers. The outspoken poetry of Marion Bernstein supports this position succinctly in the poem 'Women's Rights and Wrongs':

You speak of women's wages  
Being scandalously small,  
Believe me, Women Suffrage  
Soon would find a cure for all<sup>88</sup>

However, in elevating this minority tradition, Leonard has ignored the domestic motifs, pastoral conventions and ballad forms found in women poets located in his original source, *Paisley Poets* and so does not provide an accurate picture of the primary concerns of women poets in nineteenth-century Renfrewshire. In *Paisley Poets*, Robert Brown includes ten female poets in his two volumes by the names of Mrs. Taylor, Jean Clerk, Margaret Ballantyne, Mary Anne Shaw, Isabella Ledgerwood, Jeannie Johnstone, Maud Graham, Margaret Wallace Thomson, Isabella Nimmo and Anna Maria Maxwell. In the work of these women writers, domestic, rural and pastoral images abound. A poet who makes considerable use of these types of images is Mrs. Taylor. Brown initially presents Mrs. Taylor in terms of the males in her life: 'Mrs. Taylor, whose maiden name was Jessie Mitchell, a daughter of Mr. John Mitchell, the poet, was born in 1815. She married Mr. James Taylor, a flower-lasher to trade, and a son of the late Bailie James Taylor, manufacturer, Paisley.' He further states she 'inherited from her father all his best poetical qualifications and cultivated the muse very successfully.'<sup>89</sup> Leonard's radical scheme was not compatible with the poetry of Mrs. Taylor which is seen in 'To A Snowdrop':

Welcome! sweet messenger of Spring,  
Thy slender form  
Looks lovelier 'mid the storm  
Then aught that Summer suns will bring<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 297.

<sup>89</sup> Brown, *Paisley Poets*, p. 48.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, *Paisley Poets*, p. 48.

In his selections of Marion Bernstein and Jessie Russell, Leonard attempts to focus on and define problems and issues belonging specifically to women which are in line with Leonard's devotion to the individual concerns of weavers. However, Leonard's representation of female poets does not effectively encompass the reality of content and form used by female poets at the time. Leonard includes only one of Brown's women poets in *Radical Renfrew*, Margaret Thomson Laird. Leonard chose Laird's 'Anniversary Lines on the Death of My Only Son', a poem which draws a sympathetic human response from him. He makes reference in her biography to the fact that mother and son were interred beside each other. A plaintive tone suggests a specific, female grief in the lines: 'Against the green leaves bud, the daisies bloom / Again I hail the summer's gladsome hours, / But ah! he comes not from the silent tomb.'<sup>91</sup> Brown emphasises that this particular poet was a native of Paisley and 'an accomplished lady [who] was much attached to literature, and to the studying of the Muse.'<sup>92</sup> As in his assessment of Mrs. Taylor, Brown describes Laird in terms of the males in her life: 'Margaret Thomson Laird, wife of the Rev. John McLeod, of the West Free Church, Alloa, was a native of Paisley. Her father was Mr. James Laird, ironfounder, Paisley.'<sup>93</sup> A closer examination of the six women poets identifies only one other that can be seen as any part of the feminist tradition that Leonard creates by recovering the poetry of Bernstein and Russell. 'Jenny – a Love Lay' by Anon ('Isabel') appears to be a poem about being a lesbian and includes the lines 'Her very smile my heart could move / To strange wild throbs of joy; / With Jenny I'd have fallen in love, / If I had been a boy'.<sup>94</sup> Joanna Picken who migrated to Canada (though not included under emigration in the theme guide) has two poems in *Radical Renfrew*.<sup>95</sup> One is a meditation on death and the other on the loneliness of old age. Mary Pyper's life was defined by poverty and she has one poem in *Radical Renfrew*. 'Epitaph – a Life' compares life to the turning seasons, from smiling and joy to sadness and sleeping. In three samples of women poets selected by Leonard, a sense of separation from society due to tragedy, poverty or old age plays more of a role than any contribution the poets make to a radical feminism.

---

<sup>91</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. 239-240.

<sup>92</sup> Brown, *Paisley Poets*, p. 167.

<sup>93</sup> Brown, *Paisley Poets*, p. 166.

<sup>94</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 234.

<sup>95</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, pp. 198-191.

There are several entries in *Radical Renfrew* which appear to owe their inclusion to Leonard's sense of obligation as an editor, or the content of the work being similar to Leonard's own poems. William Motherwell, as previously mentioned, wrote the first anthology of Renfrewshire poetry and was one of Leonard's sources. Motherwell has three poems included despite his anti-radical credentials. William Sharp was from a rich, anti-radical background and wrote the kind of nature poetry that Leonard usually overlooked. However, Sharp's fractured sense of identity – he published under the pseudonym Fiona McLeod 'an alter ego whose true identity he preserved until his death' – illustrates a sense of feeling separated from society, which may have attracted Leonard's interest. Leonard also regularly notes sudden deaths or deaths that occurred in unusual circumstances. There are several suicides recorded in the poets' biographies, including that of John Davidson who, like Leonard, 'suffered from asthma and bronchitis'.<sup>96</sup> Edward Polin 'drowned when swimming off the Newcastle-London ship while it was at anchor' and Daniel King 'was seized by inflammation of the lungs, which cut him away in ten days' illness'.<sup>97</sup> Finally, Leonard includes two 'shape poems'; one takes the form of Nelson's monument and the other is a 'letterist typographical poem' which is an innovative arrangement of spiralling sentences within two squares.<sup>98</sup> These poems may have been included, in part, because of Leonard's enduring interest in the manipulation of text on the page.

These inclusions give the anthology a quixotic feel and, arguably, further evidence the personal nature of Leonard's anthological methodology, but they are exceptions. In general, *Radical Renfrew* presents itself as a historical document which supports the linguistic realities and political concerns of poets some of whom were long forgotten in Scottish literature. In its mapping of both the location and social concerns of minority groups, *Radical Renfrew* addresses the failings of educational canonicity and teaching methodology. Leonard creates an alternative, highly personalised canon which identifies a literary tradition in which his own work belongs while also pulling in individuals who were alienated by society in ways that he identified with including radical politics, language, poverty, gender, voice or place. His creation of an alternative canon is not without casualties. Stern's notion that the anthologist has a dual role, which selects some works but

---

<sup>96</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 346.

<sup>97</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 160 & p. 330.

<sup>98</sup> Leonard, *Radical Renfrew*, p. 56 & p. 198.



marginalises, delegitimises and anathemises others is true of Leonard who generally ignores nature poetry and pastoral conventions that underpinned much of Brown's anthology and thus removes the majority of female Renfrew poets from consideration. He was forced to construct a local, radical feminist tradition around a very small number of women poets, ending up with an anthology which is overwhelmingly male. In *Radical Renfrew* Leonard allies the alienation in his own work to a hinterland of like-minded political individuals with whom he feels he shares a class tradition and confronts the post-colonial assumption that poetry written by 'the white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class heterosexual male was the norm, the rest was deviant and faintly comical.'<sup>99</sup> However, instead of creating his own alienated figures as he did in *Intimate Voices*, Leonard finds examples of them in local literature. As previously mentioned, was prepared to stretch the geographic boundaries of his anthology in order to include poets that suited his vision. Marion Bernstein was not strictly a 'Paisley Poet' but her inclusion was vital to the radical feminist tradition that Leonard tried to create. He had to adopt an even more liberal attitude to geography to include James Thomson, a poet with whom he was already familiar. Though Thomson was born in 1832 in Port Glasgow, he lived most of his life in London and he was not included in the 200-odd poets of Brown's *Paisley Poets*. His presence in *Radical Renfrew* is a deliberate political decision on Leonard's part. Leonard appears to recognise the dubiety of Thomson's inclusion and defends it with an extra-long introduction explaining the benefits of his work. Leonard's biography of James Thomson, eventually entitled *Places of the Mind*, is the subject of the next chapter of this thesis.

---

<sup>99</sup> Joyce McMillan, 'Authentic Voice of Radical Renfrew', *Herald Scotland*, 3 March 1990, p. 5.

### Chapter Three: *Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson ('B.V.')*

Chapter Two argued that Leonard constructed an unconventional anthology in *Radical Renfrew* in order to include alienated and neglected poets and that this sometimes required him to ignore his own anthologising rules. Such was the case with the poet James Thomson who was included in *Radical Renfrew*, despite not fully satisfying the anthology's strictures on locality.<sup>1</sup> In *Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson ('B.V.')*, Leonard presents the theme of alienation through his biography on James Thomson, focusing primarily on Thomson's long poem about an individual alienated from his urban environment, *The City of Dreadful Night*. This chapter explores the depth of Leonard's fascination with the poem which is manifested in the way the structure of *Places* mirrors the structure of *The City of Dreadful Night* and the ways in which Leonard's own long poem *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* is linked thematically to *Dreadful Night*. The chapter has the secondary purpose of exploring the narrative methods Leonard uses to create James Thomson as an alienated figure in his biography. This chapter contends that Leonard is both selective and tangential in his biographical research in order to present Thomson as an alienated and neglected poet who shares Leonard's own previously expressed interest in religious guilt and sin, self and social alienation, depression and alcoholism. Having created marginalised and alienated young men in *Intimate Voices*, and gathered neglected political poets in *Radical Renfrew*, Leonard now highlights alienation in an extended treatment of Thomson's life.

Together with the poetry and essay collection *Reports From the Present: Selected Work 1982-94* (1995), Leonard's biography *Places of the Mind* was part of a two-book deal published by Jonathan Cape in 1993. This is the most mainstream period of Leonard's career and his negative reaction to his newly acquired position will be discussed in the next chapter. Prior to Leonard's biography, the last extensive biography of James Thomson was in 1899 by Henry Salt.<sup>2</sup> This lengthy neglect of Thomson might partly explain why Leonard's literary biography was greeted by a flurry of newspaper reviews

---

<sup>1</sup> Although James Thomson was born in Port Glasgow, he lived most of his life in London.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Salt, *The Life of James Thomson ('B.V.')*, (London: Watts & Co, 1916).

and ‘generated considerable acclaim.’<sup>3</sup> The substantial amount of research that Leonard amassed in his long role as biographer is a point of agreement with the critics. For instance, Aonghas MacNeail stated: ‘the fullness of the picture we are given is a tribute indeed to the patience and tenacity of the biographer, who spent sixteen years researching his subject.’<sup>4</sup> Patrick Crotty concurred: ‘His book is remarkable, above all, for its accumulation of a mass of significant detail about the worlds through which Thomson moved.’<sup>5</sup> Leonard’s sixteen-year quest as Thomson’s literary biographer suggests a long-standing determination on his part to retrieve Thomson from a marginalised position. It should be noted that this is the longest Leonard has spent working on a text. Though published in 1993, work on the biography had started in 1976 at Glasgow University as a postgraduate thesis. Leonard says little about the book’s development, stating only that the text ‘has changed out of all recognition since the work done then.’<sup>6</sup> Though reticent about the motivation behind the biography and the process of writing it, Leonard does mention in the introduction how Thomson’s work, *The City of Dreadful Night*, left a significant impression on him when he first encountered it in Hugh MacDiarmid’s *The Golden Treasure of Scottish Poetry*.<sup>7</sup> Leonard has also stated of his biography that ‘it is not an in-between book for me. It was not something I was doing when I was not writing poetry.’<sup>8</sup> He admits that ‘for some years a photograph of Thomson [hung] on the wall.’<sup>9</sup> With these details in mind, it is conceivable that, over time, the focus on objectively reporting the facts of Thomson’s life diminished and Leonard’s own interests came to the fore.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of James Thomson’s life in order for the reader to understand how Leonard presented and interpreted the various tragic aspects of it. It then discusses how Leonard modelled the structure of *Places of the Mind* on Thomson’s long poem *The City of Dreadful of Night*, which, it argues, is due to Leonard’s determination to rescue the poem from obscurity and introduce it to modern audiences. The

---

<sup>3</sup> Mario Relich, ‘Reviews of Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson (“B.V.”). The City of Dreadful Night’, *Lines Review* (1994), pp. 56-58 (p. 56).

<sup>4</sup> Aonghas MacNeacail, ‘Journeys on the edge of darkness,’ *Scotsman*, ‘Weekend’ magazine, 20 February 1993, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Crotty, ‘Dread, drink and despair: James Thomson’s struggle against a Godless, crack-down universe’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 March 1993, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xiii.

<sup>7</sup> Crotty, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Taylor, ‘The poet as biographer’, *Scotland On Sunday*, ‘Spectrum’ supplement, 21 February 1993, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xv.

chapter then discusses how religion was significant to *Places of the Mind* in two ways: how Leonard diverges from discussing Thomson's life to explore an interest in the Millennialism movement and how the structure and content of Leonard's long poem about religious guilt and sin, *A Priest Came on at Merkland St*, was modelled on Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways in which Leonard's narrative style presents Thomson as an isolated figure suffering from social alienation. Leonard's expansive research on Thomson's mental breakdown; his insertion of Thomson's fragmented diary entries which captures a sense of a split personality; and his method of presenting Thomson without much visual detail illustrates Leonard's vision of Thomson as an alienated figure.

### **Life of James Thomson 'B.V.' 1834-1882**

The tragic aspects of James Thomson's biography illustrate an individual whose early experiences shaped his later mournful works. Thomson's previous biographer Henry Salt states of the poet: 'The tragic side of Thomson's life, it must be owned, is by no means pleasant reading for a pleasure-loving public. I regret it. I wish it were a less sombre story that has to be told. But what's a biographer to do?'<sup>10</sup> Born in Port Glasgow in 1834, Thomson had a life that was 'generally bleak, starting with his childhood'.<sup>11</sup> Thomson's mother was a follower of the Millennialism preacher Edward Irving who was ousted by the Kirk in 1833 for 'testifying others to speak in tongues'. Thomson's father was a merchant seaman who suffered a stroke, resulting in the family's move to London so that his mother could work as a seamstress.<sup>12</sup> After Thomson's mother died in 1842, he was sent to the Royal Caledonian Asylum, a home for the children of Scottish servicemen.<sup>13</sup> Thomson then trained as an army schoolmaster in Chelsea and was stationed in Ballincollig in County Cork which was 'the first of many Irish appointments'. In 1862, he was 'discharged in disgrace'.<sup>14</sup> While in Ireland, however, Thomson met Charles Bradlaugh

---

<sup>10</sup> Henry S. Salt, *The Life of James Thomson ("B.V.")*, (London: Watts & Co, 1916).

<sup>11</sup> Relich, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> Relich, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xii.

<sup>14</sup> Crotty, p. 4.

who would later publish Thomson's work in the *National Reformer*.<sup>15</sup> Crotty suggests that Thomson was negatively affected as he had 'spent twenty of his twenty-eight years in institutions. In the two decades left him, he never fully adjusted to life "outside".'<sup>16</sup> Thomson returned to London to work as a journalist and secretary. He taught himself French, German and Italian. The pseudonym 'B.V.' (Bysshe Vanolis) is an amalgamation of Bysshe (as in Percy Bysshe Shelley) and a mild anagram of Novalis, the eighteenth-century German romantic poet.<sup>17</sup> Thomson worked as a clerk for a mine company in Colorado and then for the *New York World*, as a war correspondent.<sup>18</sup>

On 4 November 1864, a night thoroughly discussed in Leonard's biography, Thomson suffered a breakdown and burned all of his papers. As MacNeacail put it in his review of Leonard's work, 'Thomson, at the age of thirty-five, destroyed every trace he could find of his previous life.'<sup>19</sup> Thomson, obviously distraught, wrote later in his journal: 'burned all my old papers ... took me five hours ... I could no less than consume the past. I can now better face my future, come in what guise it may.'<sup>20</sup> The future held his most significant work, *The City of Dreadful Night*, which took four years to complete and appeared in instalments in the *National Reformer*. As Leonard later stated in an article in *The Edinburgh Review*: '*The City of Dreadful Night* – the most pessimistic poem in the English language – is a poem written by a man, addressed to men, about a state of consciousness, indeed a state of existence, considered peculiarly masculine.'<sup>21</sup> Critical reception was not entirely positive when *The City of Dreadful Night* was published in a book with other poems in 1880, though George Eliot and George Meredith were admirers.<sup>22</sup> Thomson's other publications included *Essays and Phantasies* (1881) and *Satires and Profanities* (1884). Thomson died in 1882 of alcohol-related diseases. He is buried in Highgate Cemetery.<sup>23</sup> Critics concluded that Thomson led an alienated existence

---

<sup>15</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xii.

<sup>16</sup> Crotty, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xii.

<sup>18</sup> James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night*, ed. by Edwin Morgan, Canongate Classics (Edinburgh: Canongate Press Ltd, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> MacNeacail, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xiii.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard, 'Mater Tenebrarum: A Study of James Thomson (1834-82) "Bysshe Vanolis"', *Edinburgh Review* (1985), pp. 47-60 (p. 48).

<sup>22</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, pp. 240-245.

<sup>23</sup> Thomson, p. 1.

full of missed opportunities. Bertram Dobell asserts that, had the poet battled his own ‘inherited defects and peculiarities of his temperament’, Thomson would have had ‘as prosperous a career as his predecessor.’<sup>24</sup> In the introduction to *Dreadful Night*, Edwin Morgan makes the significant link between the narrator who feels disconnected from his surroundings in the long poem and Thomson himself. Morgan questions: ‘But who or what alienated Thomson? What made him an alcoholic, an atheist, a pessimist, and are these quite separate conditions?’<sup>25</sup> These are important questions which Leonard attempts to answer by bridging Thomson’s long poem and the events of his life.

### ***Places of the Mind and The City of Dreadful Night***

Michael Benton states that there are two types of biography: ‘documentary’ and ‘aesthetic’. A ‘documentary’ biography, according to Benton, is one that recreates a life by rigidly sticking to ‘time-specific data’. In contrast, an aesthetic biography is ‘fluently written’ and ‘conventionally organised’, and illustrates the biographer’s narrative imagination in response to imagining his subject’s emotional needs.<sup>26</sup> Categorising Leonard’s *Places* is complicated by its particularised structure, but it might be persuaded into the category of an ‘aesthetic’ biography as it endeavours to link the work of James Thomson, especially *The City of Dreadful Night*, to Leonard’s own work. In the introduction, Leonard is clear about his intention for *Places* as a ‘shape, containing a biography, made slowly in response to the shape of the Art of another. That is at any rate how its author best wishes to describe it.’<sup>27</sup> Categorising his biography with a vague term such as ‘shape’ might be Leonard’s way of protecting himself from critics who later pointed out some weaknesses in the book. Some critics disliked the indistinct tones of Leonard’s narrative and his reliance on research without speculation or conjecture. Crotty stated: ‘too scrupulous dependence on documentary sources leaves key areas of his subject’s life unexplored and even unacknowledged.’<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Dobel, p. 1 (His ‘predecessor’ being the other James Thomson who wrote *The Seasons* (1726-30)).

<sup>25</sup> Morgan, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Benton, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xiii.

<sup>28</sup> Crotty, p. 4.

Much like Leonard's hybrid collection of poetry, essays and cartoons, *Intimate Voices*, and his political, historically based anthology *Radical Renfrew, Places of the Mind* contains an original structure fashioned around Leonard's interests. *Places of the Mind* is directly modelled on James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*, the long poem about an alienated individual wandering a desolate city at night. The two texts share a formal structure. Each has a preface (in Thomson's case, a proem) and twenty-two sections. The reflective structure provides a strong link between the two works. *Places'* structure of several chapters also supports Leonard's central exploration of locating the influences of *Dreadful Night* through its comprehensive and chronological sweep of Thomson's life. Leonard's desire to emphasise the greatness of the poet's work is seen in the structure of his biography which is a tribute to Thomson's poem. The four sections of the book, 'Angel', 'Warrior', 'Unarmed Man' and 'The City of Dreadful Night', are derived from images in section twenty in *Dreadful Night* and collectively present the theme of 'collapse'. Leonard's naming of these sections illustrates his interest in Thomson's breakdown. As MacNeacail says, 'The opening section of Places, entitled 'Angel', is named after the statue mentioned in chapter twenty as "an angel standing in the moonlight clear".'<sup>29</sup> In Thomson's narrative, the angel fights a sphinx in the town square. The text's narrator wakes to hear the clashes of the angel's wings, sword and finally the angel's body:

The angel's wings had fallen, stone on stone,  
And lay there shattered; hence the sudden sound<sup>30</sup>

The subsequent section titles of 'Warrior' and 'Unarmed Man' are also derived from the text and describe the angel's further collapse. As the narrator states:

The warrior's sword lay broken at his feet  
An unarmed man with raised hands impotent.<sup>31</sup>

Gray sums up the action and suggests the scene describes depression: 'Again the doze, the crash. The man's head has fallen and rolled between the sphinx's paws. On those who have known depression the poem can act as tonic.'<sup>32</sup> Leonard states of this section: 'And the process by which this angel loses his wings, then his sword, then ends with his head

---

<sup>29</sup> MacNeacail, p. 7 and Thomson, p. 67.

<sup>30</sup> Thomson, p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Thomson, p. 68.

<sup>32</sup> Gray, p. 11.

between the sphinx's paws – this represents the process of spiritual, then physical, then mental despair, that parallels the death of faith, hope and love. And this is the initiation rite of the narrator himself.<sup>33</sup>

The four sections are representative of areas of Thomson's life and, in their derivation from a scene of breakdown, metaphorically illustrate Thomson's mental collapse. Each section of 'Angel', 'Warrior', and 'Unarmed Man' is meant to summarise a definitive period. MacNeacail suggests that the opening section 'Angel' is representative of Thomson's orphaned and religious childhood, 'Warrior' is representative of his time as an army schoolteacher, and 'Unarmed Man' could suggest his 'earlier stages of civilian life' when Thomson worked as a secretary, journalist and poet.<sup>34</sup> Crotty also remarks on Leonard's harmonising of images of *Dreadful Night* to periods of Thomson's life, calling it a part of Leonard's 'schematising'.<sup>35</sup> The titles are metaphorical but the reader can find reason in Leonard's pairings. 'Angel' summarises Thomson's innocent childhood where he absorbed teachings from the Millennialism Sect and the Short and Longer Catechisms which had conflicting ideas of salvation. 'Warrior' is symbolic of Thomson's entry into the military as a schoolteacher, and where his 'armour' became his reading materials of Dante, Shelley and Novalis. In 'Unarmed Man', his dishonourable discharge from the army was the metaphorical disarming.<sup>36</sup>

Leonard's definitive labelling of periods of Thomson's life make his intentions clear: the biographer is primarily interested in tracking possible inspirations or motivations leading up to the composition of *Dreadful Night*. One defining moment where the narrative pace slows down is when Leonard describes Thomson's act of cathartic destruction before composing *The City of Dreadful Night*. Leonard excerpts a large chunk of Thomson's notebook to convey his desperate but resolved voice:

Burned all my old papers, manuscripts, and letters, save the book MSS, which have have been already in great part printed... I was sad and stupid - scarcely looked into any; had I begun reading them I might never have finished their destruction... The memories treasured in those in the letters can never, at least in great part, be revived in my life again, nor in the lives of the friends yet living who wrote them.

---

<sup>33</sup> Leonard, 'Mater Tenebrarum', p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> MacNeacail, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Crotty, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 100.



But after this terrible year, I could do no less than consume the past. I can now better face the future, come in what guise it may.<sup>37</sup>

After this revealing excerpt, Leonard quickly switches to discussing Thomson's initial drafts of *Dreadful Night*. As Leonard states: 'Two months later he finished two verses of a poem that was eventually to run to 1, 123 lines, being twenty-two sections, and take him four years to write.'<sup>38</sup> It is clear that Leonard wants to the reader to make the connection between Thomson's destruction and the act of creation. After this section, the biography experiences an anti-climatic effect when the section titles cease and the remainder of the text is shelved under the heading *The City of Dreadful Night*. In this narrative move, Leonard suggests that defining different aspects of Thomson's life is no longer important. Perhaps the abrupt closing sentences at the end of the section 'Unarmed Man' reiterates the significance Leonard places on Thomson's process and construction of *Dreadful Night*: 'Thomson was to call his completed poem *The City of Dreadful Night*. The poem's sections did not come to him in the order in which he finally arranged them. The first two verses he finished early in 1870, and dated "January 16th".'<sup>39</sup>

Leonard's organisation of the narrative into sub-headings which describe solitary figures, i.e. 'Angel', 'Warrior', 'Unarmed Man' fosters the theme of alienation. These subheadings suggest Christian iconography which reinforces Leonard's idealisation of Thomson as a writer whose work is conditioned by a sense of Christian guilt. Equally, the headings reinforce Leonard's notions of Thomson as a mythical figure whose life has been characterised by diminishment. In a sense, Leonard re-creates Thomson not as an individual but an imaginary character, perhaps as the sombre narrator in *Dreadful Night*. In keeping with Leonard's narrative strategy of mirroring the structure of both *Dreadful Night* and *Places*, in Verse Twenty it is the narrator who witnesses (and suffers from) the angel breaking into smaller pieces, from sword-wielding warrior, to disarmed figure, to mere rubble, and the sphinx's cold gaze. The narrator describes the collapse in bleak language:

Again I sank in that repose unsweet,  
 Again a clashing noise my slumber rent;  
 The warrior's sword lay broken at his feet:  
 An unarmed man with raised hands impotent

<sup>37</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 144.

<sup>38</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 144.

<sup>39</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 146.

Now stood before the sphinx, which ever kept  
Such mien as if with open it slept.

My eyelids sank in spite of wonder grown;  
A louder crash upstartled me in dread:  
The man had fallen forward, stone on stone,  
And lay there shattered, with his trunkless head  
Between the monster's large quiscient paws  
Beneath its grand front changeless as life's laws.

....

I pondered long that cold majestic face  
Whose vision seemed of infinite void space<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, in Chapter Twenty in *Places of the Mind*, Leonard describes, in notebook entries, the beginning of Thomson's breakdown. This is a tricky area of the chapter, as, without introduction, Leonard inserts a series of notebook entries assumed to be made by Thomson. These entries, written in a third-person voice, are notes for a poem entitled 'Insomnia'. The fantastical prose lines describe a man's desire for death:

FEBRUARY 25TH. The Image: I can only open my wings when you  
lie in genuine slumber, and do not know I am here. Sleep only can stir  
my wings; sleep, and you will be borne gently across the night on my  
pinions.  
He: I know both you and I want the same end. What could be more  
gladly brought than sleep, whose absence is longed for equally only by  
Love and Death?<sup>41</sup>

Verse Twenty-One in *Dreadful Night* closes the long poem with an image of a dominant female figure, the winged woman based on the figure in Albrecht Durer's *Melencolia I* (1514).

Low-seated she leans forward massively,  
With cheek on clenched left hand, the forearm's might  
Erect, its elbow on her rounded knee.<sup>42</sup>

Her presence is described by Morgan as generally 'apathetic'; she is 'the embodiment of whatever it is that makes the night city dreadful.'<sup>43</sup> Indeed there is a cold grandeur in the

---

<sup>40</sup> Thomson, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 290.

<sup>42</sup> Thomson, p. 69.

<sup>43</sup> Morgan, p. 22.

figure's gaze of 'full set eyes, but wandering thick mazes / of sombre thought beholds no outward sight'.<sup>44</sup> In Chapter Twenty-One, Thomson's death is written with a strange sense of detachment and coldness. Leonard records stark diary entries which contain the last of Thomson's voice. We hear an attempt at determination: 'I must get a new lodging & when settled will let you know address ... I do not what to turn to yet [sic], but must evidently resolve without delay.'<sup>45</sup> The remainder of the chapter consists of reports on Thomson's demise and his death is treated with restraint and the barest of announcements by telegram from the Medical Resident Officer at the University Hospital to J.W. Barr: 'Regret to say James Thomson died this evening at 10.'<sup>46</sup> This parallel between the tones of the texts may not be intentional, but shows a similarly detached attitude to tragedy.

### Millennialism in *Places of the Mind*

In his discussion of *The City of Dreadful Night*, Henry Paloucci states: 'Although it is not a "religious" poem in the sense that Tennyson's In Memoriam is sometimes said to be religious, *The City of Dreadful Night* is, nevertheless, an essentially a Christian work of art.'<sup>47</sup> Though Leonard is right to identify Christian allusions in *Dreadful Night*, his decision to begin the biography with a discussion on salvation in the Millennialism sect suggests that his own interests are the dominant foci of the biography. Pre-Leonard biographers of Thomson such as Henry Salt and Bertram Dobell paid scant attention to the influence of religion in Thomson's life. By contrast, Leonard decides to open the biography not by discussing Thomson's birth, but with a detailed history of the preacher Edward Irving which suggests a transfer of Leonard's own religious interests into the biography. Leonard's inclusion of the Millennialism sect in such a significant position as the book's opening section suggests that religion was one of the sources of Thomson's alienation.

Leonard's opening sentence to the reader is a stark statement on the Millennialism religion: 'In early nineteenth-century Scotland the public statement of Christian beliefs

---

<sup>44</sup> Thomson, p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 296.

<sup>46</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 303.

<sup>47</sup> Henry Paloucci, *James Thomson's The City of Dreadful Night: A Study of the Cultural Resources of its Author and a Reappraisal of the Poem*, second edn, (Wilmington: Griffin House Publications, 2000), p. 145.

known as the Westminster Confession of Faith was commonly read and learned in schools and homes along with the Shorter and the Longer Catechisms.<sup>48</sup> Leonard became preoccupied with research into the sect and its notions of salvation. He admits he spent ‘two and a half years’ researching Millennialism in the West of Scotland. He says of the experience: ‘That’s enough to do anybody’s head in for the rest of their lives.’<sup>49</sup> However, the inclusion of Millennialism at the start of the biography serves Leonard’s apparent objective of wrapping the text in the theme of Christian guilt and sin. Leonard’s opening chapter about the history of Millennialism in the West of Scotland sets up the idea of the conflict between behavioural determinism and free will. The basic tenet of the Westminster Confession of Faith is that a chosen number of followers are guaranteed an afterlife. A preacher by the name of Reverend John MacLeod Campbell was disturbed by the idea of Atonement as a ‘limited insurance policy’ for some. Campbell devised a new theology, the basics of which Leonard explains: ‘This forgiveness and love was not a thing to be owned, or achieved, but was a given state of being to be realised and acknowledged. Don’t try to do good to win God’s love; realise God’s love and you will try to do good.’<sup>50</sup> Campbell’s preaching influenced a woman dying of tuberculosis named Isabella Campbell, who adopted a mindset called ‘peace in believing’. Isabella’s sister Mary became influenced by such ‘religious enthusiasm’. Mary began to attend the sermons of a ‘charismatic’ Edinburgh preacher named Edward Irving who preached that Christ’s works on earth were done by the ‘man anointed with the Holy Ghost’. On her deathbed, Mary Campbell began speaking in tongues, having been touched by the Holy Spirit due to her realisation that God’s love was upon her.<sup>51</sup>

Leonard’s interest in the Millennialism movement may be based in an attraction to the sect’s view on salvation and the responsibility of the individual to be in control of their own salvation. The Catholic Church in which Leonard was raised, and whose teachings the Millennialism sect denied, is seen by Leonard as having committed a major error in its treatment of survivors of sexual abuse. Leonard has publicly disagreed on what he sees as the Catholic Church’s practice of remaining silent on the subject of sex. In an article published in Scotland’s *Herald*, Leonard described how he ‘kept a childhood rape secret

---

<sup>48</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 5.

for nearly five decades' due to feeling 'shunned' by the Catholic Church. Leonard claims that a 'cult of virginity' evident in the church's teachings persuaded him to keep quiet about a sexual assault that occurred when he was twelve, in a field outside Glasgow. Leonard stated, 'So long as "virginity" is perceived as the acme of virtue, and thus conflated with "purity" meaning not having sex – the Church will be unable to deal properly and fully with its own rape cases.'<sup>52</sup> Similarities are evident between the 'responsibility' and the 'guilt' that Leonard felt harbouring the secret in his adolescence and Thomson's guilt over his sister's death by 'measles caught by me' which also occurred during his adolescence. Though the two matters are unlike in nature, they may explain the explorations of alienation by guilt, hopelessness, unworthiness and religious hypocrisy which are evident, as will be demonstrated later in the chapter, in both *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* and *The City of Dreadful Night*.

Leonard's interest in Millennialism is also connected to the focus on Thomson's religious upbringing. Leonard has a particular image of Thomson as a young person who was raised in the ways of the church. Leonard contends that, though there were other factors such as poverty, alcoholism and a lack of support for his writing, Thomson's religious upbringing was the leading influence behind *Dreadful Night*. His mother's preacher Edward Irving and the catechism he received at the Royal Caledonian Asylum acted as catalysts for his creation of *Dreadful Night*. A fragment from Leonard's opening paragraph of the preface to *Places* presents his hypothesis:

Some have seen it in the debate between a law-making angry God the Father of the Old Testament, and a loving and forgiving Jesus Christ, of the New. For a person to be born having already inherited the responsibility for making a perfect father so angry, the children must needs have been very bad indeed. But if one was convinced that in essence one was very bad indeed, it might prove difficult to be convinced at the same time that one was worthy in any capacity to be loved.<sup>53</sup>

This statement describes a state of feeling unworthy of God's love due to belief that one possesses an inherently sinful nature. This echoes the Catholic belief in 'original sin' which Leonard thinks informed both Thomson's life and his work. Leonard remarks: 'From the outset, James Thomson's poetry shows a basic conflict of a man with a deep

---

<sup>52</sup> Martyn McLaughlin, 'Poet: Catholic Cult of Virginity Made Me Keep Rape a Secret Leonard Tells of Five Decades after Being Shunned', *Herald Scotland*, 21 December 2005, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xi.

sense of Christian guilt and sin – and a weak Christian faith.’<sup>54</sup> Thomson’s state of being was, Leonard contends, caused by his being born in Port Glasgow where these Millennialist sects prospered. His mother followed Edward Irving who dismissed the teachings of both Protestant and Catholic churches and believed that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ was imminent. Furthermore, after Thomson’s father suffered a stroke, he began taking him to ‘private spiritual gatherings’. Thomson may have grown up with the idea that those who believe they are ‘good’ enough will be blessed by the Holy Spirit. However, Leonard hints in the postscript that Thomson may not have believed he was inherently good since, as mentioned, his sister died of measles originally caught by him.<sup>55</sup> Leonard posits that Thomson’s sense of guilt caused him to feel unloved and alienated from others in his world. He contends that the Orthodox Church of Scotland’s Shorter and Longer Catechisms that Thomson was required to learn while at the Royal Caledonian Asylum convinced him of his inherent unworthiness.<sup>56</sup> Leonard suggests that Thomson may have been confused by the Church of Scotland’s teachings as they would consider his previous religious beliefs to be ‘heretical’. As Leonard states: ‘By the time Thomson was old enough in 1850 to leave the Royal Caledonian Asylum, he would therefore have been consistently grounded in the alleged sinfulness of men – but less consistently grounded in the nature of their alleged salvation.’<sup>57</sup> He flags up the rigorous tone of the shorter and longer catechisms by including excerpts. Leonard mentions that Thomson lay in bed worrying about memorising the catechisms in full. Thomson was forced to memorise a catechism which teaches the Christian concept of original sin: ‘What is the misery of that estate where into man fell? All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever?’<sup>58</sup> Thomson’s poetry after leaving his post as army schoolmaster in 1852 ‘describes a male looking to a female to restore his lost faith’.<sup>59</sup> Leonard’s interest in Thomson’s religious upbringing and its consequences for his life and art, however, are not restricted to *Places of the Mind* and are also detectable in terms of artistic influence,

---

<sup>54</sup> Leonard, ‘Mater Tenebrarum’, p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 320.

<sup>56</sup> Leonard, ‘Mater Tenebrarum’, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> Leonard, ‘Mater Tenebrarum’, p. 48.

<sup>58</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> Leonard, ‘Mater Tenebrarum’, p. 48.

particularly that of Thomson's major work on Leonard's long poem *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street*.

### ***A Priest Came on at Merkland Street & The City of Dreadful Night***

This section of the chapter will argue that Leonard's long poem *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* was inspired by Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*. *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* and *The City of Dreadful Night* are connected by their similar use of literary allusion, their exploration of psychological states of mind and a common concern with 'pre-determinism versus free will'. Narrative associations between these two works illustrate how Leonard was influenced by Thomson and also demonstrate how concepts of alienation as a consequence of religious upbringing were common to the art of both men. As previously mentioned, Leonard's fascination with Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* occurred when he encountered the long poem in Hugh MacDiarmid's *The Golden Treasure of Scottish Poetry*.<sup>60</sup> Leonard's attraction to *Dreadful Night* may have been the voice of the poem's male narrator, who suffers from a lack of confidence and feelings of unworthiness. This male narrator wanders the streets of a large urbanised area, meeting other isolated characters which Morgan characterises as 'the drunks, the drug addicts, the half-crazed, the homeless, the sleepless, the lonely.'<sup>61</sup>

The *Dreadful Night*'s narrator's posture and attitude is much like the narrator in *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street*. Leonard seems to confirm this position in his article in *The Edinburgh Review*: 'The male narrator, looking for redemption in a female, considers himself unworthy of God's love.'<sup>62</sup> Paloucci argues that Thomson's poem mirrors the predicament of the Biblical character Job, a generally good person who endured unbalanced misfortune: 'namely, that the best deeds of men motivated by their own wills are utterly worthless.'<sup>63</sup> Indeed, Thomson's prefacing 'Proem' illustrates a male explaining to the reader that he is writing from what Leonard terms as the 'ultimate position of self-debasement':

---

<sup>60</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. xiii.

<sup>61</sup> Morgan, p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Leonard, 'Mater Tenebrarum', p. 47.

<sup>63</sup> Paloucci, p. 146.

Lo, thus, as prostrate,  
 In the dust I write  
 My heart's deep languor and my soul's sad tears <sup>64</sup>

An unloved male narrator searching for understanding also features in *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street*. The poem begins with the narrator in the Glasgow subway which he likens to being in a coffin:

when I think I'm dead  
 and I'm in my box  
 and it's all dark <sup>65</sup>

The two texts are further connected by a motif of understanding one's mortality. The narrator in *Dreadful Night* who writes in the 'dust' is already spiritually dead. His intention is to explain to a select group of others the relationship between death and 'death-in-life'. 'Death-in-life' in the poem takes place in an unnamed, gloomy city where 'the sun has never visited' and 'mourners' wander 'with heavy drooping head (s)'. The narrator is not directing the poem to the religious, the content or the young, but to those who are already living in sadness.<sup>66</sup> As Leonard states: 'It may seem a paradox, given that the male persona of the poems is now "dead", that the poems – and he – should continue at all. But this paradox and this "death", is precisely what "The City of Dreadful Night" is about.'<sup>67</sup> Leonard suggests that the narrator being dead is a literary device. The narrator must be already dead for his realisation of the futility of life as an unloved individual to be believed by the reader. Similarly, in *Merkland Street* the narrator metaphorically 'dies' towards the end of the poem. He sees death as an escape from previous sexual abuse hinted at during the course of the poem. The narrator states he's 'awful lonely', 'doesn't understand what people are for' and 'maybe I think about the box too much.'<sup>68</sup> The narrator enacts his own death by wishing himself dead three times.<sup>69</sup> Like the narrator in *Dreadful Night*, death is viewed as an appropriate resolution to the narrator's conflicts.

There are also similarities in the circular structure of both texts. *The City of Dreadful Night* contains a rigid structure of twenty-one segments plus the introductory

---

<sup>64</sup> Thomson, p. 27.

<sup>65</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 27.

<sup>66</sup> Leonard, 'Mater Tenebrarum', p. 53.

<sup>67</sup> Leonard, 'Mater Tenebrarum', pp. 52-53.

<sup>68</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 32.



‘Proem’. Even numbered segments are written in the present tense. Odd numbered sections are written in the past tense and describe aspects of the city in the narrator’s own voice.<sup>70</sup> The number twenty-one is derived from an equation Thomson created that incorporates Saint Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians: ‘And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three’.<sup>71</sup> The equation appears in Edwin Morgan’s introduction to *Dreadful Night*:

Life divided by that persistent three = Lxx = .210

333<sup>72</sup>

The equation also represents a cyclical motion manifested in the poem. In Section Two, the narrator describes a man who showed him the three spots in the city where Faith, Love and Hope perished. The narrator realises that they have walked a circle, and his companion is about to leave on another mournful circle:

He circled thus for ever tracing out  
the series of the fraction left of Life;  
Perpetual recurrence in the scope  
Of but three terms, dead Faith, dead Love, dead Hope<sup>73</sup>

Though *Merkland Street* does not inhabit a rigid numbered structure, an eternal circular motion is suggested through the pamphlet’s cover presentation of a hand-drawn Glasgow subway map. The leading image of a subway dictates the position of the narrator facing a priest, as if the two were sitting across from each other in a confessional. The circular motion suggested by images of a subway is continued through a variety of phrases. Firstly, the repetition of beats from Mahler’s heavily toned Seventh Symphony, the narrator’s nervous humming of ‘dah dum, dad um dah dee / da DAH, da, DEE da da da’, which can be seen a coping device and is uttered once more at the close of the poem.<sup>74</sup> The narrator also voices the ticking of a clock which suggests he feels time weighing heavily on him.<sup>75</sup> This image is echoed in Thomson’s insertion of a watch which can erase time:

---

<sup>70</sup> Leonard, ‘Mater Tenebrarum’, p. 53.

<sup>71</sup> Leonard, ‘Mater Tenebrarum’, p. 54.

<sup>72</sup> Morgan, intro to *The City of Dreadful Night*, p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> Thomson, p. 15.

<sup>74</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 33.

Take a watch, erase  
 The signs and figures of the circling hours,  
 Detach the hands, remove the dial-face;<sup>76</sup>

The final correlation between the two long poems is the use of allusion to support the narrator's position. In *Dreadful Night*, Leonard notes that Thomson's watch phrase 'echoes' Waller's 'On the Fear of God', a text that Thomson taught as an army schoolmaster. Leonard also notes similarities in structure to Dante's Hell with 'negative reversals' to Dante's trilogy. Section Six of *Dreadful Night* describes people as barred from Hell because they actually have 'no hope left' to abandon. In Section Four, the narrator's remark when left on the shore 'but I, what do I here' is similar to Matilda's 'Surgi, che-fai?' in Canto Thirty-Two. Furthermore, Leonard notes that Spenser's 'enchanted palace' is similar to Thomson's 'mansion of dead Love, wherein a young man, turning to stone, keeps a vigil by the corpse of the woman he loved.'<sup>77</sup> However, as Leonard remarks:

It mustn't be thought that Thomson, in these 'replies' to works of literature, was playing a literary game of spot-the-author. He wasn't writing for examination students, nor attempting to conceal his emotions behind a smokescreen of literary references. For as anyone who reads Thomson's critical essays will discover, Spenser and Dante... were people whose works Thomson cared about, passionately. So his references to previous writers are not indications of his distancing himself, but are indications instead of the true intimacy of his address<sup>78</sup>

Leonard inserts significant literary allusions in *Merkland Street*. The narrator creates a relationship with Shelley by stating: 'My name is Ozymandias, King of Leithland Road.' This is a direct allusion to Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet 'Ozymandias'(1818):

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings  
 Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Thomson, p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Leonard, 'Mater Tenebrarum', p. 56.

<sup>78</sup> Leonard, 'Mater Tenebrarum', p. 56.

<sup>79</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias' <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/poem/175903>> [accessed on 9 June 2009]

Pointing out the similar structural features and comparable themes of mortality, sin and victimisation within these long poems is significant to understanding Leonard's motivation for the writing the biography. By drawing these parallels, Leonard argues that Thomson's poetry exhibited the alienating effect of his relationship with faith, and this could as accurately be said of Leonard himself.

### ***Places of the Mind* narrative**

Leonard's portrait of Thomson arises entirely from historical notes about the era in which Thomson lived, Thomson's own writings and the observations of others. This results in a detached narrative which comes across as static and clinical, but, arguably, frees Leonard to concentrate on the areas of his subject's life and work that are of most interest to him. Initially, this detachment imparts the idea that no individual completely understood the personality of James Thomson. It could also be interpreted as a show of respect to the memory of Thomson, but it eventually results in the reader becoming distanced from Thomson. Critics note Leonard's lack of speculation but usually deem it as a good thing. Gray's review recognises the absence of Leonard's voice but attempts to turn this observation into a positive attribute: 'It is alive with voices. We hear many kinds of poet, priest, teacher and reformer speaking ... Tom Leonard's use of many voices is deliberate. They give evidence from which readers will form their own conclusions.' Ken Cockburn states:

One of the most striking aspects of the book, especially given Leonard's earlier works, is the lack of explicit criticism, polemic and speculation throughout... Leonard's precision is also an expression of respect for Thomson: he deals in detail with what is known, and whatever regrets or frustrations he may feel at those unrecorded aspects of Thomson's life, does not seek to impose conjectured histories.<sup>80</sup>

As previously mentioned, Leonard's opening discussion of behaviourism versus free will does not immediately include Thomson, until the reader understands the significance of this conflict to Thomson's output and to the themes in *Dreadful Night*. Leonard also does not start chapters with introductory sentences pertaining to Thomson. For example,

---

<sup>80</sup> Ken Cockburn, 'Towards This Particular Place: Tom Leonard's *Places of the Mind* and Its Relationship to His Earlier Works', *Verse*, 11 (1994), pp. 120-26 (125).

Chapter One begins with ‘In early nineteenth-century Scotland the public statement of Christian beliefs known as the Westminster Confession of Faith was commonly read and learned in schools and homes along with the Shorter and the Longer Catechisms.’<sup>81</sup> Chapter Eight begins, ‘Shelley in 1860 had not yet been accepted as part of the respectable English literary canon, though he had been taken up by radical freethinkers who looked to works such as “The Necessity of Atheism” and “Queen Mab” as key texts in the republican atheist cause’.<sup>82</sup> The Thomson figure appears behind these opening statements of general interest. In the closing chapter, Leonard states ‘The remarriage of Austin Holyoake’s widow had meant that there was space in the family lair, it being now unlikely she would be buried in the grave of her former husband.’<sup>83</sup> Though this sentence is subsequently followed by one explaining where Thomson’s coffin will be laid, Leonard’s indirect paragraph structure creates distances between Thomson and the reader. Leonard’s conception of Thomson seems fully formed in his mind, and he therefore has difficulty structuring the narrative for others with less knowledge of him. Leonard is diverted from his role as authorial biographer only when he narrates his own thought processes about Thomson when these require further clarification.

The absence of speculation in *Places of the Mind* co-exists with an absence of narrative imagination. Large amounts of administrative data concerning the routines and rules of Thomson’s life at the Royal Caledonian Asylum and as an army school teacher are included at the expense of a flowing narrative. This relative absence of narrative imagination is evident from the book’s opening chapters. As previously mentioned, Leonard’s refusal to begin the narrative with a portrait of Thomson and opting instead for an extended history of Millennialism illustrates his view that salvation is a central motif in Thomson’s work. The volume and detail of Leonard’s historical portrait of the Millennialism sect overshadows Thomson’s arrival on page twelve. This birth announcement consists of two sentences and contains no emotional sentiment. Leonard even ties Thomson’s birth announcement to Irving: ‘Two weeks before Irving’s death, on Sunday November 23rd, Sarah gave birth to a boy in Port Glasgow. The boy was given his

---

<sup>81</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 87.

<sup>83</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 306.

father's name, and the following February James Thomson was born.'<sup>84</sup> In the closing sentence of the biography, Leonard also speaks of Thomson distantly and as part of a mutual action between reader and narrator of putting him away: 'I will have Vane's story lie open at this poem, and now we must leave this place where we have met, and return into our own lives.'<sup>85</sup> In *Places of the Mind*, Leonard employs an objective voice which does not always position Thomson as the central focus. Leonard even uses a detached voice when discussing the sad events which he believes informed Thomson's character. Relich states that Leonard is 'particularly sensitive, even admirably reticent', in his description of the death of Thomson's sister and the later death of supposed love interest Matilda Weller.<sup>86</sup> What appear to be five devastating events in Thomson's life are summarised in a single, long paragraph without any speculation on Thomson's emotional state:

James had by this time a sister two years younger than himself of whom he was 'very fond'. Then she died, as he later put it, 'of measles caught from me'. This in his opinion deepened a melancholy in his mother that he attributed firstly to the death of her step-brother John Parker – drowned in a shipwreck on the Goodwin Sands off Dover – who had been a favourite with her. But Sarah and the young James in London both had another cause for some unhappiness. Mr. Thomson, when he returned from the China voyage with the *Eliza Stewart* in September 1840, was semi-paralysed from a stroke suffered at sea. He was paralysed down his right side, and though he subsequently recovered sufficiently to walk with a dragging motion of his right leg, his right arm never regained its power. Sarah tried to support the family by court dress-making, a trade learned using money supplied by her mother. But her husband was now unpredictable in his moods and, though there were conflicting accounts from relatives about how he behaved, he was understood by some to have become violent towards her.<sup>87</sup>

Despite the positive critical reception, Leonard's lack of sympathetic narration or speculation causes structural problems later in the biography. Aside from an accruing distance between the reader and text, the biographer's choice of no 'conjectured histories' is a surprise to the reader come Chapter Nineteen, when the minute details of Thomson's life are presented in his diary. However, this approach also allows Leonard to concentrate on the areas of Thomson's life and work which focus on areas which seem to be of more

---

<sup>84</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 12.

<sup>85</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 320.

<sup>86</sup> Relich, p. 56.

<sup>87</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 17-18.

interest to the biographer, namely Thomson's struggle with alienation in his life and in his work.

### **Thomson as alienated figure in *Places of the Mind***

Leonard's detached narrative of Thomson, this section will argue, frees him to present his subject as alienated and isolated figure by focussing on the poet's unemployment, alcoholism and mental health issues. By concentrating on Thomson's disoriented and fragmented diary entries, Leonard paints Thomson as a person suffering from self-alienation. As Feuerlicht states, 'The blame for self-alienation falls sometimes on an unhappy childhood, more often on the human condition, and most often on society'.<sup>88</sup> In the preface to *Places of the Mind*, Leonard contends that unemployment, bouts of alcoholism, the recent death of friends and a general 'mood of unhappiness' in the lead-up to his thirty-fifth birthday were the driving forces behind Thomson's composition of *Dreadful Night*, a process which lasted four years. 'At any rate,' Leonard states, 'he wanted as he put it to "consume the past", the better to 'face the future come in what guise it may.'<sup>89</sup> Leonard also sees Thomson's creation as the product of a depression generated by his current circumstances. Throughout the text, Leonard uses narrative techniques to demonstrate Thomson's sense of separation from the world. In terms of structural devices, he portrays Thomson as a fragmented and helpless figure by inserting Thomson's diary entries into the work. In Chapter Twelve, the commencement of Thomson's composition of *The City of Dreadful Night* shifts into a series of notes and excerpts from Thomson's manuscript. The starkness with which these entries are excerpted illustrates Leonard's perception of Thomson's disoriented thought processes. Most notable is the stark and linear presentation of excerpts, where Thomson's development of *Dreadful Night* is charted. Leonard labels each excerpt with the date and inserts fragmented diary extracts into the text. Lines such as in 23 May's entry suggests Thomson's fragile psychological

---

<sup>88</sup> Feuerlicht, p. 37.

<sup>89</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, xiii.

state where he may have heard voices: ‘I could poison you or shrivel you up, the thing said.’<sup>90</sup> Another excerpt reads:

The voices were in dialogue. First voice: So you have come back?  
I was about to follow you. Second Voice: That I have come back is because  
there is no hope.<sup>91</sup>

The use of double voices is not a new thing in either life or in literature. As Feuerlicht argues, the notable example in Scottish Literature is Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. A further excerpt on 24 May reads: ‘Take pity on me, this is my own lifetrack I’m tracing. Find your own. No one can trace anyone else’s. I’ve already traced the full length of those other two tracks on my hands and knees.’ Leonard does not summarise or conjecture as to possible reasons for Thomson’s deeply personal scribbling.

The fragmented structure of Chapter Nineteen ‘Stone on Stone’ is a further example of Leonard’s manifestation and perhaps dramatisation of Thomson’s neuroses. Chapter Nineteen is an optional chapter that Leonard considers ‘a necessary part of the underlying structural argument of the book’, though the reader may skip ahead to Chapter Twenty if ‘interest commands.’<sup>92</sup> Leonard introduces this unusual chapter by stating:

Including the day he was born and the day that he died, James Thomson lived for 17,360 days. He kept two notebook diaries (one for business, one personal) while in America in 1872, and a notebook diary while in Spain in 1873. After this he maintained each year a commercial pocket dairy, and these have survived for the years 1874 to 1881, with the exception of 1875 which is missing. The commercial diaries, which end with the entry for October 29th 1881, have frequent blanks, sometimes for days, sometimes for months at a time.<sup>93</sup>

Leonard then includes a meticulous, self-calculated ratio of written entries to blank entries:

Year	Entries	Blanks
1877	213	152
1878	236	129
1879	200	165
1880	152	214

---

<sup>90</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 150.

<sup>91</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 156.

<sup>92</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 254.

<sup>93</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 255.

1881

161

141<sup>94</sup>

This chapter consists of a ‘computer-generated random number sequence’ of Thomson’s diary entry from 1877 to 1881.<sup>95</sup> Leonard insists that ‘the reader can have a general understanding of what follows if it is simply borne in mind that most entries make references to an essay, article or review in hand, or the books being read for such.’<sup>96</sup> How random these selections actually are, and why Leonard has included them in this manner, can only be surmised. Gray believes that Leonard’s random selections are because ‘he doesn’t want to be suspected of a prejudiced selection.’<sup>97</sup> Relich infers that Leonard’s chapter of random instances gets both reader and biographer ‘closer to the truth.’<sup>98</sup> It can be argued that Leonard’s painstaking and (perhaps unnecessary) efforts stems from his urge to metaphorically merge himself into Thomson’s life. It is true that the non-linear, associative and repetitive content of these entries gives a sense of Thomson’s day-to-day existence. The entries are consistent: each one reports the weather, his day’s meals, the day’s readings and those with whom he conversed. An example entry comes across as rather mundane in its daily summary of events:

#### THURSDAY JANUARY 20th 1881

Bright cold day, but little wind. Pleasant out. Morng. Up late again. B.M. for a short while. Aftn. Called on Marston for a walk, he engaged for Canonbury. Strolled, then Gower St. Evg. Finished Silas Marner. Then looking at Adam Bede.<sup>99</sup>

It is remarkable that Leonard reprints these diary entries starkly, and Leonard does not elaborate on what Thomson might be thinking or feeling. It is worth noting that important news items such as ‘G.W.F. told me of his engagement (Sunday night) are mentioned singly and with no further explanation.’<sup>100</sup> The unsystematic ordering of different days – some of which start as ‘Sharp northerly dust’ to ‘Dull but no rain till night’ gives a shape to

---

<sup>94</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 255.

<sup>95</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 253.

<sup>96</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 255.

<sup>97</sup> Gray, p. 11.

<sup>98</sup> Relich, p. 56.

<sup>99</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 261.

<sup>100</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 257.



the narrative.<sup>101</sup> The flux of Thomson's creativity, its eventual starts and stops, is also conveyed in Leonard's unpatterned narrative arrangement.

Leonard's preoccupation with Thomson's money difficulties and alcoholism also points to Thomson as an alienated figure. In Chapter Twelve, Leonard returns to the topic of drinking and unemployment just before Thomson was to write *Dreadful Night*. Thomson was not paid for a recent article in esteemed journal *Fraser's*. Leonard remarks that 'though it had brought him a breakfast with the editor, it did not bring him any money as Froude never sent any payment.'<sup>102</sup> Leonard adds that Thomson's 'financial outlook was becoming grim. He had started drinking again that year after a year's abstinence; though never mentioned in note-book or diary ...'<sup>103</sup> Leonard also remarks on the meagreness of Thomson's employment opportunities. Throughout the biography, Leonard keeps track of Thomson's intermittent writing contracts and laments when one falls through. In Chapter Seventeen Leonard remarks on the fact that 'in August 1877 *Cope's Tobacco Plant* became his only regular source of income ... Publication of his first collection might have helped.' Leonard often gives reasons for Thomson's lack of employment, usually due to a falling out with the publisher or due to insufficient funds for the publication to continue. Leonard points out that Thomson's bad temper may have contributed to his lack of employment or publication: 'Thomson found the behaviour of the publishers Henry King especially exasperating ...'<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Leonard projects Thomson's struggles with alcohol by re-integrating quotes from previous biographers and friends of Thomson's who also commented on the author's drinking. Summarising from an article written by H. Bonner about Thomson's demise, Leonard boldly states that: 'The drinking, it was decided, was constitutional: his father drank, other members of the family drank, so Thomson's drinking had been his "miserable inheritance".'<sup>105</sup>

In the final chapter Leonard solidifies the sense of Thomson as an alienated figure. Entitled 'Postscripts', Chapter Twenty-Two attempts to bury Thomson in a post-modern fashion through excerpts of remembrances from his peers and Leonard muses over his

---

<sup>101</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 258.

<sup>102</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 143.

<sup>103</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 144.

<sup>104</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 224

<sup>105</sup> Leonard paraphrases from H.B. Bonner, *Our Corner*, 1886, *Places of the Mind*, p. 307.

previous hypothesis that *Dreadful Night* was product of a depression based originally in childhood misfortunes. Leonard's argument fits Feuerlicht's assertion that 'The blame for self-alienation falls sometimes on an unhappy childhood, more often on the human condition, and most often on society.'<sup>106</sup>

There was no argument either about the unhappiness caused Thomson by some circumstances of his life: the death of his young sister, his father's illness and change of mood, the boy's removal to an orphanage, his mother's death; his want of recognition as a writer, his isolation in lodgings, his penury in the last years of his life. These matters of circumstance could even be seen as predisposing factors towards an unrestrained adult unhappiness that the drinking if not the writing itself might have sought episodically to uninhibit. The question was whether such predisposing factors towards depression could cumulatively add up to the nature of determinant. For some the answer was no insofar as this particular list of circumstances went, but yes in respect of a final Overshadowing Circumstance of Life-Event, which had tragically tipped the balance.<sup>107</sup>

The 'Overshadowing Circumstance of Life-Event' in question could be the death of Matilda Weller, a young girl he taught while working as an army schoolteacher in Ireland. In July 1853, Thomson received word that Matilda was 'seriously ill' and the next day received news 'telling him she had died'.<sup>108</sup> Leonard contends that there is evidence pointing towards Matilda Weller as the cause of Thomson's depression. He cites various sources which illustrate that Weller's death irrevocably destroyed Thomson: Percy Holyoake stated that the lock of hair given by Weller to Thomson was the only possession buried with him; references to a young girl in poems such as 'Mater Tenebrarum'; and the sonnets to the Barneses: 'A lady of sorrow, 'Vane's story', 'I had a love' and 'The poet to his muse'.<sup>109</sup> Leonard also mentions the words of Bertram Dobell: 'it is in the sixth sonnet that we find the key to Thomson's life story – in so far at least as we can find in any one event the key to the complexities of the human soul. It was in the household of Mr. and Mrs. Barnes, as we are here informed, that Thomson first met his "Good Angel" – the young girl so much loved and afterwards so deeply regretted.'<sup>110</sup> However, the mirrored structures of *Places of the Mind* and Thomson's *Dreadful Night* and the biographer's focus on the religious aspects of Thomson's life do not support the hypothesis that Thomson's

---

<sup>106</sup> Feuerlicht, p. 37.

<sup>107</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 307.

<sup>108</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 50.

<sup>109</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 308.

<sup>110</sup> Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, p. 308.

depression was solely due to the death of a previous love. The capitals that Leonard bestows to ‘Overshadowing Circumstance’ hints at some reservations (as well as a sense of irony) concerning the possibility that one event could be the entire explanation for a large-scale work. Rather, Thomson’s greater motivation for *Dreadful Night* was his strict religious upbringing, an aspect of life to which Leonard could relate.

No book on James Thomson has been written subsequent to *Places of the Mind*. Leonard's biography, deemed 'a serious book with an enlightening intellectual purpose', is still the most recent extensive published work on Thomson. This chapter has discussed previous biographies and literary criticism on Thomson; criticism of *Places of the Mind*; the relationship between Leonard's 1970 long poem *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* and Thomson's seminal work *The City of Dreadful Night*; the self-conscious structure of *The City of Dreadful Night* and *Places of the Mind*; and manifestations of Leonard's previously established interest in the alienating effects of religious upbringing, alcohol abuse, depression and breakdown and alienation expressed in poetry.

## Chapter Four: *Reports From the Present: Selected Work 1982-94*

The previous chapter discussed Leonard's biography of James Thomson as a study of an alienated figure. This chapter focuses on *Reports From the Present: Selected Work 1982-94*, Leonard's fourth book, a collection of poetry, literary criticism and satirical essays. In this collection, Leonard's essays critique the cultural practices of education, media language in modern warfare, and cultural festivities in Glasgow from the perspective of an individual who is on the outside of these activities. Leonard's use of verbal irony, his preoccupation with international modern warfare, and his repeated references to listening to television and the radio in a solitary environment, creates the persona of an alienated individual choosing to live 'outside', or on the periphery, of popular culture. This compares markedly to the poems and essays in *Intimate Voices*, where Leonard, as a speaker of urban phonetic dialect and from a working-class background, comments on power relations in language. In *Reports From the Present*, however, Leonard's commentaries on educational practices in schools and media coverage of the war in Iraq, are written from less personal, more remote, positions where, this chapter will argue, he begins to display aspects of Richard Schat's belief that a contemporary writer can be alienated from popular culture 'if he "rejects" it, or has an attitude of indifference to or detachment from it.'<sup>1</sup> This chapter explores the satirical and political content of the poetry, essays and experimental works contained in *Reports From the Present*. It argues that Leonard voices a socially estranged and isolated perspective particularly through his use of verbal irony and that he eventually creates a complex exploration of an isolated and mentally fragile housewife in *nora's place*.

*Reports From the Present* seems to have been intended as a provocative collection but, in fact, it sees Leonard in a shifting mode. He fails to comment on some of the major political issues of the time and his views on language, politics and culture as commodities suddenly seem old-fashioned in a Glasgow that was re-imagining itself as 'a city of culture', despite opposition to the official branding exercise from Leonard and others. In *Reports from the Present* Leonard begins the process of transferring his attention from

---

<sup>1</sup> Schat, p. 177.

political topics such as the interrelations between language, class and politics, to focus on the exploration of self-alienation and existential concepts in his work. This transition is illustrated most profoundly by the poetry pamphlet *nora's place* (1990) which is included in *Reports From the Present*.<sup>2</sup> The poetry sequence, this chapter will argue, is an interpretation of a concept included in *The Divided Self* (1960), a text about schizophrenia written by Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing.<sup>3</sup> In his exploration of the schizophrenic experience, Laing used the term 'ontological insecurity' to describe the state of feeling separated from one's immediate surroundings. This chapter ends with a discussion of self-alienation and finds that *nora's place* has previously unrecognised roots in R.D. Laing's psychotherapy theories, offering the sequence as an example of Laing's 'ontological insecurity' represented in poetry. It argues that, with its fragmented presentation, short verses and domestic content, it is *nora's place* which is the most significant piece in the entire collection due to its intimate creation of an alienated persona. In its exploration of household tensions, fear of the outside and Nora's isolation, the sequence enacts Leonard's shift from acerbic political commentary to the marginalised domestic sphere, where he remains, in a topical and thematic way, in his subsequent collection *access to the silence*.

### ***Reports From the Present: structure***

*Reports From the Present* collects work from a shorter time period (1982-94) than Leonard's previous collection of poetry and essays *Intimate Voices*, but eschews chronological arrangement in favour of thematic arrangement. The book is divided into two halves, roughly by theme. The 'Reports From the Present' section contains literary criticism concerning the state of language and literature in Britain. These works include 'Arts as Encounter: Three Essays', the pamphlet essay *On the Mass Bombing of Iraq and Kuwait, Commonly Known as the Gulf War with Leonard's Shorter Catechism*<sup>4</sup> as well as literary criticism on the poet Charles Reznikoff. At the beginning and end of this section

---

<sup>2</sup> Tom Leonard, *nora's place* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (London: Pelican Books, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Tom Leonard, *On the Mass Bombing of Iraq and Kuwait, Commonly Known as 'the Gulf War' with Leonard's Shorter Catechism* (Stirling: AK Press, 1991).

are two fragmented poetry sequences, *Situations Theoretical and Contemporary* and *nora's place*. This chapter focuses on Leonard's evolving persona as a disengaged critic and includes analysis of the cultural arguments contained within 'Arts as Encounter: Three Essays' as well as the use of verbal irony, fragmented poetry and exploration of self-alienation in *Situations Theoretical and Contemporary* and *nora's place*.

In contrast to the formal register and political rigour of the 'Reports From the Present' section, 'Antidotes, Anecdotes & Accusations' consists of satirical, experimental and theatrical pieces which employ devices such as portraiture, fragmentation and irony to analyse the politics and culture of Glasgow and televised media coverage. In these works, Leonard's degree of success in his employment of these devices varies according to how profitably he is able to provide an enlightened ironic edge to topics such as masculinity, culture and sectarianism. In some of these satirical works, Leonard overstates his argument and is not able to provide an ironic twist on what is already stated in the text, causing these **essays** to appear flat and one-dimensional. Some of these pieces in this section that will be discussed later in this chapter include 'A Night at the Pictures', 'Rangers Sign the Pope', 'Beer Advert', 'A Handy Form for Artists for use in connection with the City of Culture' and 'Mr Chesty Burns the Fried Bread'. Though the publication dates of these pieces are close together, comic and satirical pieces have been gathered at the back of the collection, which gives the impression that the anthology loses seriousness of purpose as it progresses. The chapter begins with an examination of 'Arts as Encounter: Three Essays'; then investigates the use of verbal irony in 'Antidotes, Anecdotes & Accusations'; and finishes with *nora's place*, where Leonard's interest in self-alienation comes to the fore.

### **Report from the past: three essays**

The first half of *Reports From the Present* contains three essays from Leonard's oeuvre: 'Poetry, Schools, Place', 'On Reclaiming the Local' and 'Literature, Dialogue, Democracy'. Leonard's views on literature in schools and culture as property, as initially explored in *Radical Renfrew*, are revisited in *Reports From the Present* and to some the arguments now seem repetitive, locked in the past and out of touch with current educational standards and practices. In the closing line of a review, Patrick Crotty calls

*Reports from the Present* 'A savage report from the present, maybe, but equally one from the past.'<sup>5</sup> He questions whether Leonard's assessment on the state of literature in schools and his insistence on culture as transferrable property were either relevant or still applicable in the 1990s when this collection was published. In 'Poetry, Schools and Place' Leonard equates the study of literature with capitalist practice. Students are expected to learn poems provided by their teachers and upon exam day, critique the poem to standards expected by the government curriculum. Leonard defines students' conditioned view of poems as a 'treasure chest of valuables, which the student should remove one by one and display to the examiner.'<sup>6</sup> He further defines the transactional and contractual relationship into a three-item equation: 'object = property = commodity'. Literature becomes an 'object', and 'the property derived from the work of art is sold as a commodity to the examiner, who places a value on it and ultimately offers in return a bill of currency.'<sup>7</sup> This simple argument is extended in the introduction to *Radical Renfrew* entitled 'Literature, Dialogue and Democracy', which is also collected in *Reports From the Present*. In this essay Leonard critiques educational practices, namely his belief that schools creates a class-based hierarchy in their selection and study of literature. Leonard presents his points in numbered form, allowing the essay to adopt a certain air. He describes the 'basic ideas' instilled in students: a series of limitations on how literature should be viewed, in particular that 'real poems' are ones that English teachers use in class and said teachers are the best people to explain them; the 'best poems' are used in exams and only those who do well in these exams are 'best able to understand and to write poetry.'<sup>8</sup> These points appear in the essay numbered, centred and indented on the page, as if constructing a 'ladder' of Leonard's thought as a metaphor for his ever-increasing frustration with the teaching of poetry in immutable educational systems.

Crotty points out that 'Leonard's position has scarcely budged in twenty years' despite the fact that the schools' positions on literature have changed.<sup>9</sup> Crotty may be referring to Leonard's essay 'The Proof of the Mince Pie' which was first published in

---

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Crotty, 'Language, Rage and Class', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 July 1995, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> Crotty, 'Language, Rage and Class', p. 12.



*Scottish International* in 1973.<sup>10</sup> ‘The Proof of the Mince Pie’ is a basic prototype of the argument contained in both ‘Poetry, Place and School’ and ‘Literature, Dialogue and Democracy’. In his meditation on the meaning and origin of ‘culture’, Leonard concludes that the academic body is culpable. He accuses universities of being counterproductive to the acts of creativity and the study of literature:

Is nothing sacred? No, nothing is as far as the university is concerned; and the university is at the heart of the perpetuation of the ‘culture’ myth. The university (and here I speak specifically about the arts faculties) is a reification of the notion that culture is synonymous with property. And the essentially acquisitive attitude to culture, education and a good accent is simply an aspect of the competitive, status-conscious class structure of the society as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

Leonard is reluctant to abandon his long-held views on language politics and culture as property despite their diminishing relevance in the modern age. Crotty identifies two immutable strands in Leonard’s working-class notions, or ‘utopian roots’. The first is Leonard’s belief that the labour force means ‘alienation’. As Crotty states: ‘His view of industrial work as a mode of alienation might have been revised in the light of the more estranging effects of mass unemployment, for instance.’ The second is Leonard’s view that students should hold democratic rights in the classroom. Crotty notes that Leonard’s idea that students should be able to vote on whether or not a teacher attends their creative writing seminars reveals ‘an almost touching loyalty to the idealism of the 1960s.’ Crotty also states that Leonard ‘incidentally comments’ on poststructuralist theory when Leonard gripes: ‘We have witnessed the destabilisation of the subject of the subject-centred universe and the rise of a cultural physics that places the mobility of the sign at the de-centered centre of all discourses.’<sup>12</sup> Poststructuralism is the literary theory that ‘renounces its privileged position in language and over its object ... it also renounces the quest for a cause, an author, scientific objectivity or a grounding institution behind what the text is saying.’<sup>13</sup> Leonard believes this poststructuralist statement can be roughly translated as: ‘Fuck me with a broombrushed Mars Bar’.<sup>14</sup> His unwillingness to integrate poststructuralist theory, psychoanalytical theory, and feminist theory into his work, while

---

<sup>10</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Crotty, ‘Language, Rage and Class’, p. 12 and Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 77.

<sup>13</sup> *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, ed. by Irena R. Makaryk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 612.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, pp. 77-78.

perhaps understandable in a creative writer, nevertheless suggests an absence of both profundity and currency. Crotty declares that: 'Indeed for all of his innovative energy, Leonard's aesthetics can seem as auld-farrant as his politics.'<sup>15</sup> Crotty's analysis sees Leonard, at this stage, as an outdated figure who was busy recycling themes from his earlier career and, as a consequence, becoming estranged from contemporary issues.

### **Isolated perspectives in 'Antidotes, Anecdotes & Accusations: Satirical, Personal and Political Pieces 1982-94'**

The previous section discussed Leonard's position on education, language and culture which hark back to previously stated beliefs. This **section** moves from 'Reports From the Present' to discuss Leonard's growing isolation and disengagement in the **section** 'Antidotes, Anecdotes & Accusations'. Specifically, this **section** discusses the manner in which these biographical pieces were commissioned, provides further discussion of Leonard's use of irony to quickly dismiss certain issues, and illustrates how some of his essays are now preoccupied with modes of remote communication such as the television and radio. This relative disengagement is evident in the ways Leonard physically and emotionally distances himself from the outside world and presents an isolated perspective in his work through his use of narrative device.

Leonard's disengaged perspective is illustrated initially in the way these works were commissioned and collected. Though dissimilar in theme, form and genre, the majority of texts in the collection *Reports From the Present* were responses to invitations from a variety of sources. These texts can be seen as initiated by the wishes of others or from a desire on Leonard's part to create a piece other people will enjoy or, at the very least, accept which may one of the reasons why they are sometimes less personal and often less angry than much of his previous work. The notion of text-as-offering is illustrated in the notes at the back of the collection.<sup>16</sup> For example, 'Pound and MacDiarmid' was written 'when asked to contribute something to a MacDiarmid centenary celebration.'<sup>17</sup> 'A Night at the Pictures' was written 'when asked to do something for a projected anthology

---

<sup>15</sup> Crotty, 'Language, Rage and Class', p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, pp. 269-275.

<sup>17</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 274.

about writers' memories of the cinema. I missed the deadline, but it was first published in the magazine *Gairfish*.<sup>18</sup> The article 'What I Hate About ...' was 'written when asked do something for the "What I Hate About ..." regular feature article of the Saturday *Scotsman*.'<sup>19</sup> Leonard's unusually passive language suggests a lack of conviction or motivation and creates the image of an individual who is apathetic to modern culture or, in the case of 'What I hate about ...', in danger of self-caricature.

Furthermore, the content of several of the pieces is viewed from a remote and partly disengaged perspective. The biographical essay, 'A Night at the Pictures', describes Leonard and his wife Sonya attending the Glasgow Film Theatre. Before entering the cinema, the two find themselves in an argument for which Leonard blames his wife: 'but as we entered the cinema, she delivered a particularly wounding remark, in a quiet voice.'<sup>20</sup> Emotionally rebuffed, Leonard withdraws from the scene and allows his eyes to rest at a particular position at the screen, 'somewhere north-west, five to eleven, of the screen itself.' Leonard is in a mode of secret resistance: 'The position of my head was such that a person who did not have a sight of my eyes would have assumed that I was watching the film. I did not want to disturb anyone else in the cinema by making a public issue of my estrangement from the communal event.'<sup>21</sup> Leonard's refusal to take in the film, but his concession to be physically present for its duration, is symbolic of his emerging position in *Reports From the Present*. Though his work was expected to comment on current events, there is a sense that Leonard is not cognitively or emotionally invested and is retreating into a realm of personal and domestic concerns.

This retreat is further evidenced, as briefly discussed earlier in the chapter, by Leonard's use of verbal irony to quickly dismiss an issue, thus avoiding having to express a more sophisticated political opinion. Linda Hutcheon defines the literary device of irony as: 'an interpretive and intentional move: it is the making or inferring of meaning in addition to and different from what is stated, together with an attitude toward both the said and the unsaid.'<sup>22</sup> Claire Colebrook's definition of irony also argues that a certain lack of

---

<sup>18</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 274.

<sup>19</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 274.

<sup>20</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 239.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 239.

<sup>22</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: the theory and politics of irony* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 11.

commitment can be present when using the device: ‘through irony we can discern the meaning or sense of context without participating in, or being committed to, that context.’<sup>23</sup> Indeed, a reader must maintain a sense of evaluative distance when analysing Leonard’s uses of verbal irony. Geoffrey Hartman characterises verbal irony, the strategic manipulation of words to convey the opposite of what is said, as the so-called ‘language giving the lie to itself yet still relishing its power.’<sup>24</sup> This brand of irony emphasises an analytical response from the reader, as he or she must realise that though the author is saying one thing, he means another. Leonard has chosen this brand of irony to comment negatively on power relations between established authorities and the working class. He uses irony, for instance, in the phonetic mimicry of powerful voices in society in the skits ‘Mr Endrew Speaks’ and ‘Beer Advert’, as well as the creation of polemical political scenarios seen in ‘Rangers Sign the Pope’.

This chapter further argues that Leonard’s particular style of irony can be categorised as ‘assailing irony’. This type of irony derives from the Latin word *assail*, ‘to leap’, as the writer is motivated to ‘leap upon’ the reader with the purpose of driving home their argument. In Hutcheon’s scale of the different types of irony and their functions, the intent behind this type of irony commences with a motivation to ‘correct’ a reader’s opinion on a particular issue or to ‘satirically’ ridicule a group or institution.<sup>25</sup> The spectrum evolves to a position of ‘destructive / aggressive’ intention, where the author bears the intention of a violent attack on a personal issue. Hutcheon’s table can be construed as ambiguous, as there is no clearly defined way for the reader to interpret the writer’s intention for making satirical remarks. As Morier states: ‘It may well be true that the range of irony depends on the ironist’s temperament.’<sup>26</sup> However, Hutcheon’s remark that assailing irony functions as an ‘aggressive putdown which keeps people in their place’ befits the tone and register of Leonard’s verbal-play.<sup>27</sup> Assailing irony, it can be argued, is the best description of Leonard’s intentions. Specifically in works such as ‘Handy Form for Cultural Artists’, ‘Mr Endrews Speaks’ and ‘Beer Advert’ one can identify a clear intent to

---

<sup>23</sup> Claire Colebrook, *Irony*, from *The New Critical Idiom series* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, *Saving the Text: Literature / Derrida / Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 146.

<sup>25</sup> Hutcheon, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> H. Morier, ‘Ironie’, *Dictionnaire de poétique et de rhétorique*, 2nd edn (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France), p. 155.

<sup>27</sup> Hutcheon, p. 11.

put down cultural and political institutions within his texts. However, Leonard is not always successful in his efforts at verbal-play in *Reports From the Present*. Sometimes his deployment of the device is hampered by the absence of an additional evaluative attitude behind the work. Unlike in *Intimate Voices*, There is a slim rhetorical difference in Leonard's work here between what is unsaid and what is said and the corrective joke within the text can be too obvious an amplification of what he feels is negative in society. In general, his use of irony in *Reports From the Present* lacks what Hutcheon defines as irony's edge: 'a meaning that is hidden, but deemed accessible, behind the stated one.'<sup>28</sup>

An example of Leonard's use of assailing irony is his deconstruction of the administrative duties expected of artists in Glasgow's City of Culture. As reviewer John Fowler notes, 'Leonard was famously one of the band of malcontents who opted out of the celebrations.'<sup>29</sup> His piece 'Handy Form for Cultural Artists' was written in '1989 as an attempt to avoid even having to say anything about the "City of Culture" promotion the following year.'<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the letter is a post-modern invention designed, in its provision of possible options, to assist all types of artists in refusing to participate in the City of Culture in an ironically polite manner. He imitates the language and semiotics of administrative work through the ironic insertion of office jargon phrases and symbols. The first few lines are filled with italicised terms, asterisks, blank spaces and possible replies for the artist to tick off as necessary: 'Dear/ Thank you for your invitation/commission,\*for me to participate/contribute\*/display/write an article/write a play/write a poem/sing /discuss/act'...'.'<sup>31</sup> In Leonard's parody of the situation, the text provides material which comments on the transference of culture in postmodern society. Specifically, the text's pre-positioned content represents Leonard's oft-explored belief that culture is not a transferrable object that can be judged, branded or owned. Leonard heavy-handedly 'teaches' this lesson through the ironic re-creation of administrative details in this work. However, the device lacks impact due to the absence of a secondary and evaluative message behind the text for the interpreter to solve, the so-called 'edge' of irony. His ironic voice continues to explore ways in which Glaswegian's are alienated within their own city, but he is speaking now of the alienation of artists who fundamentally disagree with the

---

<sup>28</sup> Hutcheon, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Fowler, p.

<sup>30</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 272.

<sup>31</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 211.

‘City of Culture’ reinvention rather than voicing the class and language issues faced by its working class population.

As in *Intimate Voices*, Leonard’s writings in *Reports From the Present* use a wide range of speech forms and tones: local, international, professional, working-class and upper-class. A varied selection of language inflections, accents, vocabulary and registers are used to imply political and social positions. A frequent device of Leonard’s is to impersonate the voices of those he despises. In both ‘Mr. Andrews Speaks’ and ‘Beer Advert’, Leonard imitates the voice of a headmaster and an American man with low self-confidence and both of these characters represent limiting views of class and masculinity. In ‘Mr. Andrews’, Leonard creates an unsettling situation where the upper-class register of Mr. Andrews’ accent is pitted against the savagery of his own actions. Mr. Andrews comes across the PA system to recount how he met a former pupil who was drinking a bottle of ‘hair lecquer’, and in light of this, classes must practise saying the word ‘Guilty’ for future use in courts. Mr. Andrews speaks with an upper-class accent and behaves like a barbarian towards his students, though he believes that his former student, the alcoholic ‘Tem’, is the real barbarian.<sup>32</sup> The impact of this skit is to illustrate how the headmaster’s negative view of his students alienates a potential relationship between him and them. Similarly in ‘Beer Advert’, Leonard employs colloquial American English. The skit features a man concerned about the size of his manhood, while promoting a special beer ‘Younger’s Tartan Special’, which he uses an aid to forget about his problem.<sup>33</sup> The hyper-use of masculinity in American beer adverts and Scottish notions of masculinity are enmeshed in this short piece to emphasise the glamour of US advertising and contrast it with Scottish male alcohol abuse. However, the irony in both of these works is poorly employed because Leonard overstates the obvious negative message. Irony is most successful when the writing ‘points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference.’<sup>34</sup> There is little difference between Mr. Andrews’ upper-class accent and his mistreatment of his students; the same absence of relational contrast is apparent in ‘Beer Advert’s simple correlation between the capacity for drinking and the size of one’s manhood. Hutcheon insists that ‘ironic meaning consists of two or more different concepts

<sup>32</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 151.

<sup>33</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 155.

<sup>34</sup> Paul de Man, ‘The rhetoric of temporality’, in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by C.S. Singleton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), p. 192.

brought together', but Leonard's concepts in these examples are not really dissimilar and, in fact, represent rather predictable associations between class and ill usage and alcohol and masculinity.<sup>35</sup>

Another example of Leonard's persona as a disengaged narrator is his creation of comical skits with unlikely scenarios; these skits can be interpreted as a method of avoiding serious discussion on topics such as modern warfare and sectarianism. In the skits 'Scotland Today' and 'Rangers Sign the Pope', Leonard creates polemic situations to convey his low opinion of both modern warfare and sectarianism. 'Scotland Today' employs media jargon to describe a fictitious boat which, upon returning from duty in the Falklands, was loaded with tacky Scottish memorabilia.<sup>36</sup> The tactic of creating polemic scenarios is further used in a skit that involves an exchange of charged banter between two Rangers supporters, 'Alex and Wullie'. Alex and Wullie hear the highly unlikely news that the Protestant football club Rangers have signed the head of the Catholic Church as a player, leading them both to comment wryly that: 'At least he wullny marry a Catholic!'<sup>37</sup> Both of these scenarios contain Leonard's trademark humour, but their simplistic ridicule of these social systems explores the limits rather than the possibilities of the device of irony effective.

Leonard continues his tendency of creating polemical fantasies in the poetry sequences included in *Reports From the Present*. For instance, he creates an entire poetry sequence out of invented political scenarios. 'Situations Contemporary and Theoretical' opens the collection in a dystopian ambience, allowing Leonard's views of British political issues to be recognised and re-formed as jokes. One of the poems describes 'National Income Card-Carrying Day', where 'citizens must wear cards prominently / declaring their total income from all sources for the / previous twelve months'.<sup>38</sup> In another poem, Leonard plays on the democratic paradox of Empire. He describes a ship called 'The Mother of Parliaments' imbuing it with false promise:

Run and tell your fellow tribesmen.  
We are going to have a referendum!

---

<sup>35</sup> Hutcheon, p. 58.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 149.

<sup>37</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 146.

<sup>38</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 7.

Shall we join the British Empire?<sup>39</sup>

This chapter argues that Leonard creates relatively simple fictive scenarios as a means of distancing himself from pertinent political issues and a way of moving on to explore the issue of self-alienation which was to become a new focus for his work. By offering a trivialising perspective on important political issues, Leonard is able to avoid having to express more considered opinion and criticism. However, in the section ‘Reports From the Present’, Leonard’s ironically naive poems pose a problem when placed beside his formal essays on literature, language and culture. It is difficult for the reader to accept both aspects of his voice – literary and analytical as well as sardonic and naive – though this tension is eventually resolved by *nora’s pace* which abandons both in favour of an exploration of self alienation that uses short verses, fragments and manipulates text and white space.

### **News media in *Reports From the Present***

Leonard’s use of media while listening alone to war reports to television or radio is reflected in the essays ‘On the Mass Bombing of Iraq and Kuwait’ and later in the poems ‘the enemy awake’ and ‘plasma nights’. His obsession with watching and listening to war reports from Iraq, combined with his deep empathy with the Iraqi people, specifically the ‘women, children and men suffering from the burn effects of Allied bombing’ illustrates a shift in interest from local culture to international disputes.<sup>40</sup> However, the anger Leonard feels towards the deceitful language of the British media regarding violence is a continuation of his desire to identify with those who feel estranged from, and unrepresented by, established authorities.

In the section ‘Reports From the Present’ Leonard’s attention shifts from his previous preoccupation with the voice of news delivery to a closer analysis of the presentation and content in news reports. He listens to war reports in the middle of the night as illustrated in his essay ‘On the Mass Bombing of Iraq and Kuwait’: ‘The BBC

---

<sup>39</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 99.



World Service in its broadcasts to North America often focuses on the transactions taking place in the United Nations building in New York. On March 20th – which happens to be the day this article is being written – the 3 am news announced the report of the United Nations envoy to Iraq.<sup>41</sup> Leonard's scathing analysis of Britain's war reportage illustrates an absence of connection or identification with modern media except in so far as he views it as a dispenser of propaganda. In his analysis, Leonard also returns to previous arguments about the intersections between politics, language and power. His commentary identifies a political misuse of language and reportage which does not include the tragedies inflicted upon the Iraqi people. He despises the needless 'mass murder' and the 'superior' West's control over the reported details. Leonard also objects to the 'anti-language' of the British media which uses falsely empowering slogans such as 'all necessary means' to hide the gruesome details contained in the war reports.<sup>42</sup> According to Leonard, ethical boundaries and binaries such as victories/losses, lives/deaths have been rendered unrecognisable; daily details have gone unreported. Leonard describes a fuel system 'destroyed by the bombing' as well as 'thousands of refugees fleeing into Iran, into an area already devastated by the Iran-Iraq war.'<sup>43</sup> Leonard accuses the media of using language dishonestly while pursuing their own agenda. He says of war reports that 'language was not being used honestly but strategically. It was necessary for the evasion of responsibility to say that the object of the exercise was the defence of freedom – not that freedom was a concept much known in Kuwait under the Emir.'<sup>44</sup>

Leonard notes that is not just the incorrect information that is being reported, but actual shifts in language to suggest complete power: '... the West has reached such a stage of information control that the victory of oracular truth over knowledgeable debate and dialogue takes place on the airwaves every minute, both in what's said and in the way that it's said. It's the "the" news that informs us.'<sup>45</sup> Leonard affirms the interrelations between speech and news by pinpointing the use of the definite article as symbolic of British dominance. As he states in his *Scotsman* article 'What I hate about the news is the definite article': 'Now I know only too well that my own country can be firing Cruise missiles into

---

<sup>41</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 98.

<sup>42</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 98.

<sup>43</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 98.

<sup>45</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 103.

foreign cities whilst the topic hanging over Glasgow whilst this is going on, is whether or not [footballer] Ally McCoist will be on the bench or the park that afternoon.<sup>46</sup> In the same article, Leonard is hypercritical of the news stations – ‘I can’t remember if it was BBC or ITV – “A newsflash has this moment arrived from the Malabar front. Our forces in South India have won a glorious victory”.’<sup>47</sup> Leonard suggests a history of uninformed news reporting by mentioning: ‘And there was the daily hate-sessions with The Beast, that Demon of the Deep who is the son of Scargill and Khomeni and Gaddafi and Hitler and Benn and Stalin and Red Robbo, all fused into one and stretched from Saudi Arabia to Turkey!.’<sup>48</sup> Leonard describes the scenes visually and cinematically, keeping action and time in synchronised motion, as if one was watching these occurrences unfold on television. In energetic language and with verbal sound effects, Leonard describes: ‘helicopters that can hover just over the horizon and fire these rockets that take out the tanks though they don’t even know there! Kapow! Zap!’<sup>49</sup> With this short piece, Leonard moves from the position of angered spectator to featured presenter.

Leonard’s preoccupation with watching war reportage later became a new form for him to express a sense of estrangement from popular media. ‘the enemy awake’, a poem published in the subsequent collection *access to the silence*, illustrates how his preoccupation with listening to the radio alone became a sustained interest. Leonard extends his imagination to give himself a role of activity:

listening to the radio  
headphoned like an airpilot  
while my wife sleeps beside me<sup>50</sup>

His narrator is isolated in this poem, but in an intellectual, political and emotional relationship with the world around him. The radio speaks to him in the seclusion of his own home, and Leonard writes his rebuttals alone, reinforcing the remote yet connected aspect of the medium. ‘Plasma Nights’, a poem published in a later collection, describes the lure of the television:

---

<sup>46</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 245.

<sup>47</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 246.

<sup>48</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 244.

<sup>49</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 246.

<sup>50</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 40.

seductive bright light  
of the evening narrative

Leonard acknowledges the distance between news story and viewer, the safety of what he views as ‘spectator dialogue’ and how he, secure in Britain, becomes ‘privileged / by bombs’.<sup>51</sup> His position is safe enough for him to comment on what is being shown on the television. Though Leonard’s criticism of war reports is consistent with previous arguments about the misuse of language by established authorities, his focus on distant foreign and international matters, unlike the personal nature of much of his earlier work, is a remote way of expressing a sense of estrangement from mainstream culture.

### ***nora’s place* and R.D. Laing’s *The Divided Self***

This final section of the chapter explores narrative and thematic connections between the writings of Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing and Leonard’s poetry sequence *nora’s place* in order to illustrate how Leonard fictively creates the marginalised, fragmented and self-alienated voice of a stay-at-home wife and mother, ‘Nora’. Characteristics of Laing’s concept of ontological insecurity will be applied to this reading of *nora’s place* order to illuminate and even encode, the depth and significance of the circular and fragmented renderings of an isolated and agoraphobic woman living with her family in Glasgow. This analysis of aspects of *The Divided Self* and *nora’s place* begins with Leonard’s positive public opinion of Laing and *The Divided Self* which he stated in an interview with Attila Dósa. When asked whether or not it worried him that ‘Laing and his brand of existential philosophy’ is now ‘discredited’ in Scotland and other places, since Leonard often made ‘direct reference’ to Laing, the poet replied:

No it doesn’t worry me at all. When you say he’s discredited, there’s more than one R.D. Laing often being referred to. There’s the early analyst of ontological security in *The Divided Self*, and there’s the later Laing often dismissed as an alcoholic hippie caught up in flower power. The latter is unfair but it’s the early Laing in any case I mean. *The Divided Self* is an important book that will remain important – like *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>52</sup> Dósa, p. 78.

Leonard's defence of Laing does not mention possible integration of Laing's concepts into his poetry, nor how Laing's ideas resonated with the poet's own philosophic outlook. However this section of the chapter will argue that the use of ontological insecurity in *nora's place* is linked to a particular case study in R.D. Laing's seminal text *The Divided Self*. These links illustrate how Leonard's sequence explores symptoms of a psychological illness whereby sufferers feel alienated from understanding their purpose in life, as well as the qualities of their own personality as they struggle with mental illness. There are significant circumstantial and thematic affinities between case study and poem sequence. This chapter illustrates how Leonard's voicing of the separation between entities found kinship in the writings of a psychiatrist who shared similar ideas about how individuals become alienated in society.

According to Ljiljana Filipovic, Laing argued that schizophrenia was an internal reaction to a person's inability to conform to mainstream societal expectations. Schizophrenia was 'an exit' that an individual takes by way of 'repressing his/her own individuality when she/he is not capable of submitting herself/himself to the conventions of society that Laing considered to be pathologically normal.'<sup>53</sup> Society, according to Laing, is not a safe and common zone, but rather a tense space where some individuals could experience a split in their identity, in the conflict between who they *feel* themselves to be and who they are *expected* to be. One can draw comparison between Laing's view of society as a difficult space and Leonard's view of a society dictated by the politically powerful which leaves individuals on its fringes. The remainder of this chapter explores Leonard's presentation of a fragmented identity through his integration of a Laing's case study into the sequence *nora's place*, as well as the common ground between poet and psychiatrist.

Ronald David Laing was born in 1927 in Glasgow. Raised only by his mother, he was born into a lower-middle-class family and attended Hutcheson's Boys' Grammar School, considered one of the top schools in Glasgow. He trained in psychiatry in the British Army during the Korean War. While stationed in the Catterick Military Hospital in Yorkshire, he counselled schizophrenic male individuals in their cells and while at

---

<sup>53</sup> Ljiljana Filipovic, 'More than 50 years after: Laing, Sartre and the Other' in *R.D. Laing: 50 Years Since The Divided Self*, ed. by Theodor Itten and Courtenay Young (Ross-on-Wye: PCSS Book, 2012) pp. 226-231 (p. 27).

Gartnavel and Southern General Hospital in Glasgow, Laing conducted similar counselling in cells with female patients. He was responsible there for ‘ambulatory schizophrenics’ – the term for less disabled outpatients.<sup>54</sup> His experiences with these patients inspired led him to write *The Divided Self* at age thirty and include some of their case studies in it. This text is an existential-phenomenological account of mental illness which has the objective of conveying to others the experience of schizophrenia.

The first three chapters of *The Divided Self* define and explore the processes of a fragmented identity. Andrew Collier notes how these opening chapters feature a characteristic of Laing’s writing: his ability to narrate to an audience how ‘others see themselves’.<sup>55</sup> The purpose of these opening descriptive chapters, Collier continues, is to describe ‘what it is like to experience the world in certain ways characteristic of a “schizoid” condition.’<sup>56</sup> In the book’s opening phrase Laing defines schizophrenics as people who experience considerable divisions between their minds, bodies and the outside world in two distinct ways: ‘in the first place, there is a rent in his relation with his world and, in the second, there is a disruption of his relation with himself.’<sup>57</sup> Laing further describes a division between the conscious and unconscious selves as a ‘mind more or less tenuously linked to the body, as two or more selves, and so on.’ As Theodor Itten states, Laing’s most significant theme in his work is ‘the pain of living the person we are not.’ Inside each person is an ‘inner true Self’, ‘and the power of the true Self (authentic living) cannot be silenced. If we don’t listen to the soul embodied within us (without a soul, no body), it makes our body ill.’<sup>58</sup> As previously stated, Laing argues that rather than schizophrenia being seen as an illness, it is actually a reaction to not being able to conform to social norms.

The most significant tool in comprehending Laing’s view of schizophrenia is his concept of ‘ontological security’<sup>59</sup> and this concept manifests itself in the poetic structure

---

<sup>54</sup> Itten and Young, p. 326.

<sup>55</sup> Andrew Collier, *R.D. Laing: The Philosophy and Politics of Psychotherapy* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, Ltd, 1977), p.1.

<sup>56</sup> Andrew Collier, *R.D. Laing: The Philosophy and Politics of Psychotherapy* (Hassocks: The Harvester Press, Ltd, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Laing, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Theodore Itten, ‘From The Divided Self to The Voice of Experience’ in *R.D. Laing: 50 Years Since The Divided Self*, ed. by Theodor Itten and Courtenay Young (Ross-on-Wye: PCSS Books, 2012) pp.190-217 (p. 201).

<sup>59</sup> Collier, p. 2.

and shape of *nora's place*. In his description of individuals perceiving the world in which they live, Laing describes humans as containing an emotional reality of being as well as a temporal one:

A man may have a sense of his presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person. As such, he can live out into the world and meet others: a world and others experienced as equally real, alive, whole and continuous.<sup>60</sup>

Laing describes a way of being which allows one to acknowledge one's existence through sensory experiences. He believes that there are people who contain a strong understanding of their 'selfhood and personal identity, of the permanency of things, of the reliability of natural processes, of the substantiality of natural processes, of the substantiality of others.'<sup>61</sup> These people can be described as being ontologically secure. In contrast, there are others who suffer from ontological insecurity and feel their sense of individuality is threatened by their tenuous grasp on their surroundings. Itten makes the important point that ontological insecurity is not a fear of losing one's identity through dying. Though death is a way to lose one's identity, the real fear of the individual is the absence of purpose or essence, or that 'what is most essential to oneself as individual might be lost.'<sup>62</sup>

Laing outlines three forms of anxiety encountered in states of ontological insecurity: engulfment, implosion, petrification. In engulfment, a person resists close relationships as they threaten their individuality. An individual must preserve their own tenuous understanding of themselves, 'otherwise any and every relationship threatens the individual's loss of identity.'<sup>63</sup> Engulfment equals a fear of being consumed by intimacy with another person. In implosion, the individual feels isolated due to an extreme sense of emptiness. As Laing explains: 'The individual feels that, like the vacuum, he is empty. But this emptiness is him.'<sup>64</sup> Although the individual craves the dissolution of the emptiness, he also resists fulfilment because he feels it is impossible. Additionally, the state of 'petrification' has multiple connotations. There is the sense that the individual has turned immobile and mute, as if turned to 'stone'; the fear of this 'petrification' occurring; and referring to an individual who is able to turn others to stone. Petrification is an element of

---

<sup>60</sup> Laing, p. 39.

<sup>61</sup> Laing, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> Collier, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Laing, p. 44.

<sup>64</sup> Laing, p. 45.

depersonalisation, whereby a person treats the other person as if they have no feelings.<sup>65</sup> Again, Collier makes the important point that these categories of ontological insecurity do not describe specific fears; rather the different emotional states of implosion, depersonalisation and petrification only act as metaphors for how the individual is feeling, so that an outsider can gain understanding of how the afflicted person feels. Collier states that 'in this respect they [implosion, depersonalisation and petrification] resemble fear of ghosts, in the fact that the mere presence of them is enough.'<sup>66</sup> Collier's comparison of these emotional states to the unpredictability of 'ghosts' illustrates how individuals in these states fear their own actions.

Leonard's use of the poetic fragment in *nora's place* is significant, as it relates to Nora's fragile sense of identity. Courteney Young, a self-identified sufferer of ontological insecurity who has written at length about Laing, describes his experiences: 'My sense of Self was – once again – splitting, being divided, and re-forming, almost on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis.'<sup>67</sup> Young describes an internal emotional state where the individual feels they have an unstable and fragmented identity. In this way, we imagine that the seventeen short poems in *nora's place* are a representation of how a person's identity becomes 'split' and 'reforms' on a daily basis and it is fitting that the poetic fragment is the main mode of Nora's narrative voice. The short, fragmented line is the stylistic form in which Leonard has chosen to lay down his text. This allows the character of Nora to release her thoughts in short bursts. The fragment, normally centred on the page with surrounding white space, suggests Nora's physical movement, spontaneous thoughts and feelings of isolation.

Though the character of Nora can be seen to be representing the alienation of domestic housewives due to their isolated existence, one can draw distinct parallels between Leonard's creation of Nora and a particular case study in *The Divided Self*, and the narrative details and visual form are symptomatic of someone who suffers from ontological insecurity. In his chapter on ontological insecurity, Laing describes therapeutic work with a housewife and mother by the name of Mrs. R. who suffered from agoraphobia.

---

<sup>65</sup> Laing, p. 46.

<sup>66</sup> Collier, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Courtenay Young, 'The 'Divided Self: A very personal account' in *R.D. Laing: 50 Years Since The Divided Self*, ed. by Theodor Itten and Courtenay Young (Ross-on-Wye: PCSS Books, 2012), pp. 121-141 (p. 130).

In her childhood, Mrs. R. felt that her parents did not bestow adequate attention on her. Laing describes a woman who 'wanted to fill a hole in her life', but did not succeed in becoming 'self-sufficient'. What Mrs. R. needed to feel complete was 'to always be important and significant *to someone else*. There always had to be someone else.'<sup>68</sup> Laing's mention of another person illustrates a need to feel secure through companionship, a condition that crops up in Leonard's sixteenth poem: 'I wish you would touch me more/ it makes me feel happy and secure'.

This thesis flags up the parts of the sequence which resonate with Mrs. R.'s search for identity and belonging in her domestic existence. In the seventeen poems of *nora's place*, Leonard creates a female-centric situation where a woman searches for a sense of individuality in her family base. Critics comment on the sequence's vision of domestic living as a rotation of chores and responsibilities and how an individual begins to identify with their routine, but they have failed to explore the existential conflicts of identity inherent in Nora's voice. Richard Price sees the main character, Nora as a 'hardworking mother' whose 'loneliness is made palpable'.<sup>69</sup> Peter Manson comments on the depression of repetitive actions, commenting that: 'The sequence *nora's place* moves in and out of the voice of Nora .... following her through a day of shopping, cooking, drinking and politics. On the way it manages to say some things about some of the painful mundanity of distress that I don't think have been said before.'<sup>70</sup> Ken Cockburn suggests that domesticity is an integral part of Nora's identity: 'Work, family, sex, illness, shopping, an existential sense of the self, are all pulled together to be seen as interconnected parts of a single situation.'<sup>71</sup> Cockburn's remark encapsulates the varied settings and themes in which Leonard places Nora and hints at her difficulty of having a single identity.

Leonard creates a fictive situation where Nora suffers internally from a fragmented identity. As a housewife living in Glasgow, Nora feels she exists only for her family and suffers from poor self-esteem and agoraphobia. The poetic sequence begins in the afternoon where she sees her children coming home from school. Here, physical movement

---

<sup>68</sup> Laing, p. 54.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Price, 'Better Than Nay Poem', *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 January 2006, p. 24

<sup>70</sup> Peter Manson, 'A Glasgow 'this'', *Poetry Review*, Volume 94 Issue 4 (2004/2005), pp. 70-72 (p. 72.)

<sup>71</sup> Cockburn, p. 56.



blended with spontaneous thought, achieved through her fragmented voice, is suggested in this poem:

soon it will be  
 the familiar footsteps  
 time sometimes from the  
  
 bottom of the stairs the  
 voices drift up maybe  
  
 if you happen to look out the window  
 at the right time, it is the right time  
  
 for a wave. the wave<sup>72</sup>

The fragment is significant to this sequence as Nora's voice has an uncertain and secluded quality. It is her pattern to provide answers to questions which are not asked, illustrating a restless state of emotions. The repeated use of the term 'right time' in the lines 'if you happen to look out the window / at the right time, it is the right time' illustrates how Nora's day consists of ritual and routine revolving around her family, as she knows the exact time, or 'right time' to wave to her children returning home from school. The fragment below illustrates Nora's acknowledgement that her sense of self should not be depersonalised as a useful object:

how quirky I am  
 but  
  
 I am not a table  
 or a pen  
 or a hill<sup>73</sup>

The inclusion of these specific yet unconnected items such as a 'table', 'pen' or hill illustrates that Nora is not entirely certain of her purpose, but knows that her identity does not entirely consist of serving or being used by others, in the way these objects do. Identity crisis of an ontological nature is a concern in *nora's place* and Leonard centres the fragments in some poems so that the white space suggests feelings of isolation. In the chosen imagery, Leonard's poems drop symptomatic hints of ontological insecurity. The

---

<sup>72</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 120.

<sup>73</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 131.

last few lines which repeat the word 'walls' suggest a sense of personal confinement and reinforces Nora's state of isolation:

I protest at this place  
with no people in it

objects for reproducing images  
people not actually present

from this wall to this wall  
and this wall to this wall<sup>74</sup>

In Laing's case study, the psychologist discerns that Mrs. R. saw the presence of her family as a way of validating their own existence. Mrs. R. looked after her sick mother and found validation for her existence through this care-giving. After the dissolution of her marriage, Mrs. R. lived with her father where she performed the house duties. Though objects were 'familiar' and 'the middle of the day was a drag', she never felt 'really on her own' when she was 'tidying up the beds, washing up'.<sup>75</sup> Mrs. R. located a sense of identity through these menial duties which created a sense of gratification and identity. In a similar context, Leonard creates fragmented poems which explore Nora's validation of her existence through her care-giving duties for her family. Nora's sense of implosion, the sensation that she is so isolated that she feels a deep sense of emptiness, causes her to project her desires onto her children. Nora becomes 'real' to herself through the needs of her children. Leonard creates a poem where Nora worries about insignificant matters such as their school lunches, where ordinary details are rendered in a rambling, curt stanza:

if they're finding  
the dinner school portions too wee it  
must be the cutbacks that'll mean  
they'd better come home ...<sup>76</sup>

Nora validates her fragmented identity through the needs of others, which illustrates her sense of self-alienation. However, according to Collier, a symptom of ontological insecurity is 'the experience of other people as objects of anxiety rather than of pleasure',<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 118.

<sup>75</sup> Laing, pp. 55-56.

<sup>76</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 121.

<sup>77</sup> Collier, p. 3.

which is apparent in the poems about Nora and in the details of the case study of Mrs. R. Both women feel their sense of identity is threatened when they are not in the company of others. Laing identified within Mrs. R.: 'a lack of ontological autonomy. If she is not in the actual presence of another person who knows her, or if she cannot succeed in evoking this person's presence in his absence, her sense of her own identity drains away from her.'<sup>78</sup> In the sequence, Leonard explores power imbalances in relationships and Nora's marriage is similar to Mrs. R's. Both women seek affirmation through their marital partners and feel neglected by them. Mrs. R. married a soldier who 'adored' her yet failed to bestow her with adequate attention. Laing recalls that Mrs. R.'s 'longing was always to be important and significant to someone else.'<sup>79</sup> In the poems about Nora's husband, Leonard inserts aspects of engulfment and depersonalisation. Nora fears intimacy with her husband, because 'engulfment is felt as a risk in being understood, being loved, or even being seen', though at the same time she depersonalises him by treating each other as if they have no feelings.<sup>80</sup> Nora laments their dwindling communication: 'I don't know what we share exclusively now / other than the children'.<sup>81</sup> Of Mrs. R.'s sexual behaviour, Laing proposed a similar motivation: 'As it was, her sexual life and phantasies were efforts, not primarily to gain gratification, but to seek first ontological security. In love-making an illusion of this security was achieved, and on the basis of this illusion gratification was possible.'<sup>82</sup> Nora also needs her husband's presence and touch to feel 'real' and to stave off a sense of alienation as seen by her admission that:

I wish you would touch me more  
it makes me feel happy  
and secure.<sup>83</sup>

During sex, she feels alive because she is joined with him:

deep in the darkness  
breath and rhythm  
moving to join  
into our orb<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Laing, p. 56.

<sup>79</sup> Laing, p. 54.

<sup>80</sup> Laing, p. 44.

<sup>81</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 121.

<sup>82</sup> Laing, p. 57.

<sup>83</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 131.

<sup>84</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 130.

However Nora also depersonalises her husband by regarding his feelings as separate from hers. Written in third person narrative, the poem hints at Nora's possible jealousy of her husband's secure sense of himself, which the narrator believes is at Nora's expense:

now he has an affair of the soul elsewhere  
 now he has the chance to be 'as free as himself'  
 that is what it's about, the sense to be as 'free as himself'  
 maybe to be as free as himself, he has to have the mother at home  
 when will nora become herself  
 when will nora feel 'as free as herself'<sup>85</sup>

The insertion of the third person in these lines is a device of Leonard's that has a double effect: it sees Nora as a 'character speaking' and as a person, albeit one with a fragmented identity. Leonard's portrayal of petrification in *nora's place* appears in a poem which is symptomatic of the state of feeling frozen into objects, as seen in the poem where Nora circles a grocery store and focuses on a series of food objects such as 'tomatoes, peppers, onions'. The materiality of objects within Nora's home and surroundings is of deep significance to Nora's perception of herself. As previously stated, petrification can suggest a fear of being turned lifeless or into stone.<sup>86</sup> At what could be termed as the sequence's lowest point, Nora is 'petrified' into a series of food items which represent her domestic role and symbolise her own perception of her worth. The poem is a list of food items which surround Nora as she walks into a grocery store. Richard Price makes the point that the supermarket's classification process is 'wryly enumerated' and suggests the interior transformation of Nora going into the shop and found, finally, 'leaning on the trolley / waiting'.<sup>87</sup> The rotating motion of the poem's form, a reflection of the grocery's circular physical structure, suggests an endless feeling of dread:

through the  
 revolving turnstile  
 past  
  
 tomatoes  
 mushrooms peppers  
 potatoes

---

<sup>85</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 127.

<sup>86</sup> Laing, p. 46.

<sup>87</sup> Price, p. 24.

cheese island  
milk margarine  
yoghurt<sup>88</sup>

Of all the poems in the sequence, the fourteenth is the most effective in capturing a sense of Nora's view of herself. Mrs. R. suffers from agoraphobia and Nora too fears making outside connections. Nora's social insecurities arise from a fear of engulfment, the fear of being engulfed by others when speaking to them:

that thing about  
                                  just talking  
where do you put your eyes:  
where do you put your eyes  
when you're  
                                  just talking?<sup>89</sup>

The influence of Mrs. R.'s case on *nora's place* is strongly suggested in a particular scene when Laing describes Mrs. R.'s anxiety 'at feeling alone' and generally avoiding going outside. However, Laing suggests that Mrs. R. could go outside if she felt she wasn't alone. Laing states: 'She could be on her own, as long as she did not feel that she was really alone' as Mrs. R. struggled when standing on the street alone. Laing recalls Mrs. R. complaining: 'In the street people come and go about their business. You seldom meet anyone who recognises you; even if they do, it is just nod and they pass on or at most you have a few minutes chat. Nobody knows who you are ... no one cares about you.'<sup>90</sup> This comment illustrates a specific tension between the states of engulfment and implosion, in which the sufferer may feel that she is afraid of being engulfed by another person's domineering identity while also feeling isolated and empty when no one is there to validate their existence. Mrs. R.'s particular feelings of isolation and neglect which arise in the street are reflected in *nora's place*, especially in the penultimate and closing poems. In these poems Leonard explores the relationship between Nora's self-identity and her physical environment. He interweaves concrete poetry techniques in order to create a charged and emotional space which illustrates the psychological principles of ontological

---

<sup>88</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 128.

<sup>89</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 74.

<sup>90</sup> Laing, p. 55.

insecurity and self-alienation. Central to *nora's place* is Nora's explorations of her surroundings and her designation of the places where she feels safe. Judging from the various places mentioned in the sequence, Nora travels a familiar and circular route from Kelvingrove Park, the rooms in her flat and the building's staircase, the supermarket and the pub the Whistler's Dog. As an experiment in concrete poetry, Leonard disperses and arranges the text to create a sense of home out of the white space:

nora's place					
nora's place					nora's place nora's
nora's place					place nora's place
nora's place					nora's place nora's
nora's place					place nora's place
nora's place					nora's place nora's
nora's place					place nora's place
nora's place					nora's place nora's
nora's place					place nora's place
nora's place					nora's place nora's
nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	place nora's place
nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	nora's place nora's
nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	nora's place	place nora's place

nora's place nora's place  
nora's place nora's place  
nora's place nora's place<sup>91</sup>

The phrase 'nora's place' is arranged as a series of columns, in varied font sizes and spanning both lateral and vertical directions. These structures can be viewed as buildings and this perhaps signifies that Nora's presence is contained in these structures. Or else the columns can be seen as pathways, representing Nora's walking routes. In either case, the repeating visual pattern establishes a home territory, possibly the areas that Nora can venture into without becoming overwhelmed with anxiety. The gradations of difference in typographies – the block of 'nora's places' on the left side are in a smaller typeset than the column on the right – can be understood as an amplification of Nora's preferred spots, or even the inverse, that the shrinking size of font indicates that these places

The closing poem provides a strong narrative link between Nora and the case study of Mrs. R., as Leonard uses the setting of the street to provide a closing summary of how a

<sup>91</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 33.

person ascertains their sense of self. In the closing poem, Nora stands alone in the street and contemplates the reality of her existence. Transferring the idea that a public street is a site of tension, Leonard uses the location as a site of resolution for Nora:

being suddenly  
walking down a street

in this place, having  
this particular sense  
not of anxiety, but

‘the fact of the presence of existence’<sup>92</sup>

The quotation marks around the phrase ‘the fact of the presence of existence’ strongly suggests that Leonard is summarising from *The Divided Self* and that Leonard borrowed the case study from Laing. The phrase ‘fact of the presence of existence’ is a strong thematic phrase within Laing’s descriptions and explanations of ontological security, especially when Laing discusses the ‘self-validating data of experience’.<sup>93</sup> Leonard’s insertion, cued with quotation marks, hints at the strong psychological foundation of the sequence. Considerable space has been committed here to establishing the parallels between Leonard’s *nora’s place* and Laing’s case study of Mrs. R., and their mutual issues of ontological security. The detailed presentation of the relationship between the two texts supports the argument that *Reports From the Present* sees a shift in Leonard’s work from a formerly aggressive political stance which explored alienation in terms of class and language to an interest in exploring alienation in more introspective ways and in a domestic setting.

*Reports From the Present* also saw a shift in terms of Leonard’s career. Even with *Places of the Mind: the Life and Work of James Thomson* (‘B.V.’) and *Reports From the Present* published under the major imprint Jonathan Cape and an established reputation for writing in the demotic about society, politics and language, Leonard was not mentioned as part of the new ‘Scottish Renaissance’, a term attached to the wave of Scottish authors commissioned by editor Robin Robertson. His name does not feature in the list of Scottish

---

<sup>92</sup> Leonard, *Reports From the Present*, p. 34.

<sup>93</sup> Laing, p. 41.

authors whose careers were ‘launched’ nationally with Cape.<sup>94</sup> Leonard’s absence from the roll call may be due to his primary position as a poet in a marketing strategy where the novel was the primary literary genre. Another possibility is that Cape created an awkward shift for him from marginalised writer to mainstream one without moving him into the realm of popular writers. Despite the apparent significance of Leonard’s publication deal with Cape, his blend of ironic posturing and experimental writing in *Reports From the Present* did not garner him a widespread following, either because his work was intrinsically of minority interest or because Leonard did not embrace the opportunity. Either way, *Reports From the Present* was Leonard’s second and final book published by a major national publisher. The anti-climatic conclusion of the relationship with Cape, however, paved the way for Leonard’s ongoing relationship with the small independent publisher Etruscan Books where, arguably, he was free to experiment and innovate and with which he published *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative*, discussed in the next chapter.

---

<sup>94</sup> Mansfield, p. 10.



## **Chapter Five: *access to the silence: poems and posters (1984-2004)* and *outside the narrative: poems 1965-2009***

The previous chapter discussed how Leonard's work in *Reports From the present* displays a conscious disengagement from popular culture as well as his exploration of self-alienation in his fragmented rendering of a marginalised female voice in the domestically-set sequence *nora's place*. Chapter Five focuses on Tom Leonard's explorations of existentialism and humanism as a framework for a marginalised and socially-alienated voice expressing an idealistic desire for individuals to attain a sense of existential freedom in their daily lives. By reframing ideas about existential freedom and human responsibility, Leonard's poems argue that one has the freedom to choose their identity, despite the cultural expectations of class, wealth, status and language pressing on individuals in society. Poems which explore existential freedom such as 'who wants to', will be analysed as will Leonard's employment of concrete poetry, field poetics and visual poetics in 'Nine Variations of Larry's Song', 'Hesitations' and in his poster poems which present a desire for existential freedom. In *outside the narrative*, Leonard also argues for a brand of contemporary humanism, though it applies only to select individuals. For Leonard, humanism is the banding together of individuals who feel alienated from the mainstream narrative and takes the form of a desire for socio-economically, underprivileged people to be valued in their communities and not be disempowered by their social class. In an idealistic manner, Leonard speaks of identifying the voice of the universal human through the use of lower case and calculated spacing on the page. His ideas on humanism are presented in his essay 'A Common Breath' as well as in poems such as 'Being a Human Being', 'Plasma nights' and 'A humanist' which will be discussed in this chapter.

The chapter integrates poems from *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative*, and tracks how Leonard moves from discussing existentialism to presenting aspects of humanism. These poems and sequences share links to Sartre's essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946), which is used as a theoretical framework. They move from expressing the desire to achieve existential freedom in daily life, to speaking of extending a sense of responsibility to others. This narrative progression appears to be motivated by the desire to

locate like-minded others who share his ideals. The chapter first discusses poems from *access to the silence* which are drawn from a twenty-year span and includes work from the pamphlet *inside looking in* published by Survivors Press (2004).<sup>1</sup> The chapter also includes work from *outside the narrative*, which was published by Etruscan Books in 2009. This collection is a selected works containing poems and posters from *Intimate Voices, Reports From the Present* and *access to the silence*, as well as the pamphlet collection *Being a Human Being* (2006). It appeared in the year of Leonard's retirement from his position as Professor of Poetry at the University of Glasgow.<sup>2</sup> The significance of Leonard's exploration of humanism, a philosophical topic through which he explores constraints on an individual's sense of freedom and identity, will be discussed later in this chapter. Bringing Leonard's treatment of existentialism and humanism together, this chapter concludes that Leonard's optimistic fragmented poems encourage the gathering of a community of fictive, fellow outsiders who are 'outside the narrative' in relation to social and cultural conventions.

### **Exploration of Existential freedom in *access to the silence***

Existential freedom is an unstated but recurring concern in *access to the silence*. A major tenet of existentialism is that 'existence precedes essence'.<sup>3</sup> This idea is central to existential thinking, because it implies the possibility of freedom in its insistence that human beings are not born with a set of expectations which they must meet; one's identity and value is determined by the individual. Sartre explains in *Existentialism is a Humanism* that man has the ability to define himself and is not be defined by either objects or persons in his life: 'We mean that man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself.' Sartre believes that man starts out as 'nothing' and builds his own character at his own pace and in his own time: 'He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself.'<sup>4</sup> Existentialists also believe that, ideally, human freedom should not be limited by external factors. Kevin Aho states: 'That means whatever our factual limitations – whether it is our genetic code, our

---

<sup>1</sup> Leonard, *inside looking in* (Glasgow: Survivors Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Crow, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Flynn, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Sartre, p. 22.

socioeconomic backgrounds, our religious or family history – they do not ultimately determine who we are. We are self-making beings responsible for the meanings we give to things through our own choices, the totality of which makes us who we are.’<sup>5</sup> Leonard's poems reflect and question these ideas in their exploration of the self in relation to their environment. A concern with the freedom to define one's self beyond social conventions and established authority manifests itself in the poems ‘coffee, cafe and the paper’, ‘who wants to’ and ‘access to the silence’, which will be discussed in this chapter.

In *access to the silence*, Leonard includes poems which question whether it is possible to determine one's identity despite the constraining effects of memory, literature and employment structures, and when in urban or domestic environments or within relationships, all of which shape a person's identity. Some existentialists argue that though freedom is quintessential to existential living, man is never really free. Hegel's theory of freedom contends that a person is only free if he is not dependent on anything outside of himself, and that ‘a man is only free when he knows himself to be free.’<sup>6</sup> Aho points out that existentialist freedom does not actually entail fulfilling one's desires, because when we do so ‘we are actually at the mercy of our wants, where we simply respond to passing whims and desires.’<sup>7</sup> Instead, existential freedom is the freedom to evaluate without bias one's own actions, ‘to interpret the world, to give meaning and value to our situation on the basis of our own choosing.’<sup>8</sup> Leonard's poetry explores ways of obtaining existential freedom in daily life and insists, with Hegel's and Aho, that individuals should have the freedom to determine their own existence, as seen by the text in poster poem ‘that each one be the subject’: ‘that each one be the subject of one's own verb.’ This phrase, as well as Aho's phrase ‘our own choosing’ is key to understanding Leonard's interpretation and application of existentialist ideals in his poetry as it encapsulates the collection's theme that individuals should be able to dictate their own lives, despite social conventions.

---

<sup>5</sup> Aho, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (New York: Prometheus Books; abridged edition), p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Aho, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> R.C. Solomon, *From rationalism to existentialism. The existentialists and their nineteenth-century backgrounds* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 1972), p. 280.

## Poems in search of existential freedom

In *access to the silence*, Leonard's poems seem to want to resolve the alienated voice by appealing to others to join him in an examination and assertion of mindful living, free from societal conventions. The repeated domestic settings of some of the poems in *access to the silence* suggest that the narrator intends to locate a sense of existential freedom in daily life. Leonard's poem 'coffee, cafe and the paper', for instance, explores the tension of being free in a public space. David Cooper's suggestion that alienated persons can struggle with objects in their surroundings chimes with Leonard's poems which deal with the relation of the self to objects. Cooper speaks of the tension between a person and the objects in the room: 'The alienated person, however, feels that objects 'dominate' him, and that he is a 'victim' of his sensual, 'anima' desires. Hence, the attempt to overcome alienation is one with the urge towards freedom.'<sup>9</sup> Leonard's poem 'coffee, cafe and the paper' explores the tension of finding freedom through actively acknowledging one's participation in communal social ritual. Leonard asserts the narrator's individuality through personalised observations of sitting in a cafe with others. In this brief poem, Leonard implies that it is language which sustains individuality, yet also connects the individual to others. Language in this respect is like coffee, a form of individual and communal sustenance or as Leonard calls it affectionately, 'the day's supply':

quiet the  
habit of

grazing  
privately publicly

language /  
other-sewn

at one  
with the many

sufficing  
the day's supply<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> David Cooper, 'Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement', in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. by Steven Crowell (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 130.

This poem first acknowledges the paradoxical experience of being alone yet surrounded by others. Then it explores the intersubjective relationship between our sense of language and others, in his pairing of the words ‘language / other-sewn’, an enigmatic phrase which alludes to the relationship between language and how individuals use language to express the terms of their existence and sense of reality. It is useful to view the ‘other-sewn’ in terms of the idea of ‘suture’, a term used in film theory for the way in which camera shots generate subjectivity. ‘Suture’ refers to the processes by which film viewers become ‘stitched’ or ‘drawn-into’ a film, and viewers react to the narrative action as though they were ‘enclosed’ in the film, perhaps even subjects within the film if they identify with the characters.<sup>11</sup> In a similar manner, Leonard's term ‘other-sewn’ suggests that individuals can view their existence as being a character in a film about their own life, in which they are both spectators and participants, and use language to express the boundaries of their reality. Another significant and recurring device in this poem is Leonard's insertion of an oblique stroke midway through a line; a symbol which presents both a break and connection between two co-existing topics. In this case, the oblique stroke represents the fragile link between language and one's subjective and ever-changing relationship with language in relation to their existence: ‘language/other-sewn’.

Freedom to be an individual within a relationship, despite the nature of the romantic relationship as a union where ideally couples share common ideas, is apparent in the poems ‘your eyes’ and ‘walking in the park’. In his review of *access to the silence*, Matt McGuire comments briefly on Leonard's treatment of the ‘existential experience unique to human relationships.’<sup>12</sup> However, he makes no further comment on the nature of this ‘existential experience’, leaving the reader to speculate on the purpose of existentialism in these poems. This thesis, however, contends that existentialism was used in Leonard's work as a way of cultivating a marginalised voice. The poems discuss moments in relationships which are both communal and subjective to the individual. Poems such as ‘your eyes’ investigate the paradox of a shared but individually felt experience. The poem uses the senses (a shared factor) to describe how both he and his partner use the same senses to interpret a room differently, using the eyes to point out how

---

<sup>11</sup> Bob Nowlan, “What is suture” (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Eau-Claire, 2005), <<http://people.uwec.edu/ranowlan/suture.html>> [accessed 5 September 2015]

<sup>12</sup> McGuire, p. 127.

they are a shared tool for vision, but paradoxically, that interpreting the colours of another's eyes is a subjective detail:

your eyes

the iris grey or is it green  
the blue iris<sup>13</sup>

Using another sense, the narrator remarks on the shared scent of freesia that both of them can smell, and the poem questions whether the narrator's idea of 'home' might be shared by his companion.

and the freesia  
with the smell of freesia  
filling the room  
coming home,  
surprised  
that place we share<sup>14</sup>

The poem 'walking in the park' questions the possibilities of parallel perceptions within a shared experience. The 'park' of the title loses its significance as a public space and becomes a private zone for the narrator to air his thoughts about his partner's particular sense of self, as well as his role in supporting her:

what happened this day, whether  
sensing your beauty

was just / the echo of nothing  
to do with me or the inside of me

but you and your private sense of being  
on this another such occasion<sup>15</sup>

Again the use of the oblique stroke between 'was just / the echo of nothing' illustrates a paradoxical, though connected experience of a 'feeling' which is not entirely understood or felt, but exists as 'an echo of nothing'. These poems present the existential notion that the self can have component parts which relate to different aspects of one's personality; having a sense of separate selves in one's body forms part of Leonard's ideas on how one 'exists'

---

<sup>13</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 108.

in the world. As existentialism is the analysis of one's being in the world, Sartre's existentialist philosophy on freedom leads ultimately to analysing aspects of the relationships between the self and other selves. As Maurice Nathanson points out, 'The dialectic between self and other selves is the key to Sartre's concept of human freedom'.<sup>16</sup> The text ends with the sense of continued individualism, though with the knowledge that the companion also has a 'private sense of being' and the narrator concludes that both are separate, though emotionally connected people.

### **Poems which locate existential freedom in memory, literature, and language**

The idea of locating a sense of individual freedom, despite external factors such as our relations to others and to objects within our environment, is expressed in Leonard's poems 'respite in the reading', 'leaning forward' and 'Skills'. In these poems Leonard also explores the possibility of shaping one's identity in relation to one's changing relationship with written texts, memories, in academic register and the professional, impersonal tones in workplace jargon. Despite their brevity and simple presentation, these poems are critiques of the constraining effects of memory, literature and employment structures, as they present the question to what degree an individual's identity can become shaped by these factors. The poems do not always resolve neatly, as seen in the closing lines of 'leaning forward', which explores the constraints of memory on one's identity and ends with the lines: 'coming back / again, maybe / all in the head', which suggests that the individual has the freedom to decide to what extent the effects of memory impinge on one's perception of their own personality.

These poems share certain formal features: use of the present tense and a first-person perspective, a lower-case typeset which suggests a secluded perspective, and short lines which create a precise, considered and yet urgent tone. Stylistically, the poems contain much white space which appears to be evocative of the perimeters of the narrator's

---

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Nathanson, 'Jean-Paul Sartre's Philosophy of Freedom' in *Sartre and Existentialism: Existentialist Ontology and Human Consciousness*, ed. with an introduction by William L. McBride (London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1997) pp.30-46 (31)

mind. The white space forms a margin around the text, and so functions as a metaphor for boundaries or edges. This idea of text as the surface of one's mind is an extension of building a sense of freedom of one identity, and being able to view one's interior part with a sense of objectivity. For example, in the poem 'respite in the reading', Leonard explores the impact and influence of text on a person's assessment of oneself, and how one can have the freedom to separate one's own thoughts from the ideas within the text. This poem explores the relationship between text and reader, as both are participants in the act of gathering and transferring information. Leonard speaks of the meeting-place between book and reader, calling 'this place ... an accompanying darkness'.<sup>17</sup> Leonard's next stanza describes the influence of text on a reader's assessment of themselves. The last line, with the words 'led into, of your own accord' conveys both a paradoxical sense of autonomy and passivity, illustrating the enigmatic nature of texts:

the role, a model  
of being oneself, helped  
by the places you were  
led into, of your own accord<sup>18</sup>

Despite the interaction between text and reader, Leonard insists that the reader can separate himself from the text's influence. The reader does not have to define his identity by what he chooses to read. The reader also has the existential freedom to step in and out of a mental space that is both flexible and inflexible, that becomes:

... a welcoming

familiar, no time to stay<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, in 'leaning-forward', Leonard explores the limiting role of memory on the understanding of one's self. Leonard seeks to separate memory from the concept of identity, seemingly arguing that the past as represented in an individual's memory is not a limiting factor. As with 'reading in the respite', Leonard describes the surface and textures of one's mind, allowing it to have both an exterior and interior shape, leading to a view of the mind as a material object:

---

<sup>17</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 38.



partly the  
inside maybe

the outside  
of it, who knows

which  
is the which

of it, the real  
base line

the hologram  
liveable within

In this poem, Leonard questions the experience of remembering and posits that even our memories do not totally define who we are. He acknowledges that the experience of reliving one's memories is fleeting, since one's assessment of self is an adaptable and variable structure:

it changes  
so readily,

the sense  
of

the place  
you come

to a constant  
gone, no

coming back  
again, maybe

all the head<sup>20</sup>

In the rambling and fluctuating rhythms of these short lines, the poem presents the idea that a person's identity is separate even from their own perception of their character, which he terms as the 'hologram liveable within'.<sup>21</sup> The poem suggests an individual has the

---

<sup>20</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 105.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 105.

freedom to reconstruct their identity even from their own (and perhaps former) perceptions of themselves.

In the poems 'Skills' and 'Opting for early retirement' Leonard searches for the existential freedom to locate one's identity despite the limitations of professional language. In the poem 'Skills', for example, the function of the worker is prized over the person's individuality. Leonard's repetition of phrases illustrates how language can be circular, and this mimics the rhetoric of job seeking:

inventing jobs  
teaching the skills  
  
of applying for jobs  
  
—  
  
one of the millions  
training  
  
to acquire the skills  
to apply for jobs

This poem does not advocate the breaking away of this kind of language, but instead the narrator allows himself to communicate in a similar manner, and the poem ends in resignation where the narrator forces himself to 'learn the ropes' and adhere to a pre-established narrative:

co-operating with management  
competing with colleagues  
  
learning the ropes <sup>22</sup>

There is the same sense of limiting one's character to fit within prescribed language in 'Opting for early retirement'. The individual is discussed in terms of their ability to suit the parameters of bureaucratic company structure. Leonard criticises the notion of being, both as a verb, and as a noun. The term 'being a quantum' accurately describes the narrator's opinion that to invest a small amount of energy in order to fit in is what companies are looking for:

---

<sup>22</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 35.

taboo being  
unpredictable being

being as quantum  
being as inefficient

guilty until innocent

the question always  
and the answer always

surely total innocence is impossible<sup>23</sup>

In these poems Leonard argues for a sense of existential freedom to oppose the constraining effects of daily life: in one's memory, in literature, within impersonal workplace jargon and even within employment structures. Using existentialism as a way to express a sense of separation from society, these poems are fragmented protests against conformity which, as the narrator argues, limits individual expression.

### Poems which aspire to construct an existential community

As mentioned in previous chapters, one aspect of Leonard's sense of alienation is his creation of alienated and outsider characters in his work. This was evident in the group of angry, violent males in *Intimate Voices*, the company of alienated and political like-minded writers in *Radical Renfrew* and his treatment of James Thomson in *Places of the Mind*. In *access to the silence*, however, Leonard specifically argues for the creation of a like-minded existentialist community. In an uncharacteristically gentle tone, poems such as 'who wants to be free', 'proem' and 'outside the narrative' use line fragments when speaking of uniting individuals who yearn for a sense of belonging. The use of line fragments seems to reinforce the strong feelings of yearning. 'who wants to be free' illustrates an aspiration for others to join the narrator in achieving release from the conventions set by established authorities, by refusing to act, believe, and behave in a manner expected by the politically and socio-economically powerful. It is a contemplative and metaphorical poem which conveys a fragmented voice through the use of generous white space, short lines and lower case letters:

---

<sup>23</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 34.

who wants to be free  
 who has need of air

who is changing  
 who has no definition

instance  
 (the right)

who wants to find out what it is  
 who wants to go forward

who wants to<sup>24</sup>

With the lines ‘who is changing / who has no definition’, which describe the state of an individual whose identity is in flux, the poem advocates an end to determining one’s identity according to conventional standards. The poem encourages individuals to accept their changing sense of self, even (and especially) when it diverges from social norms. The essence of the poem: ‘instance / (the right)’ is a short couplet (rather than a line separated by an oblique stroke) which argues that people have the right to choose for themselves. The poem ends with the narrator expressing the desire to find others who want ‘to go forward’ by banding together in opposing limits to human freedom. Leonard’s use of open and ambiguous language, such as ‘who wants to find out what it is / who wants to go forward’ illustrates a sense of freedom in itself, as the reader can imagine how these prospective experiences can be determined. Despite the encouraging tone of the poem, however, it ends rather sadly with the detached line which answers the question about being alone: ‘who wants to’.<sup>25</sup> The absence of response may indicate the narrator’s sense of separation and increasing hopelessness at finding a suitable community in which to belong. The same existentialist principle is presented in the poem entitled ‘proem’, which identifies a sense of human responsibility and a community of the separated that has similar tastes, choices, preferences:

who are we, trapped in our ways  
                     of dying towards the fact  
 of only once having been, together  
  
 or separate in our own being

---

<sup>24</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p.10

<sup>25</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 10

but never wholly separate, only a part  
of the time we live in, and with others occupy<sup>26</sup>

These two short and fragmented stanzas echo ‘existence precedes essence’ and shared responsibility. Sartre explains that due to their shared space on earth, humans are responsible for each other: ‘Thus the first effect of existentialism is to make every man conscious of who he is, and to make him solely responsible for his own existence. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.’<sup>27</sup> In speaking of Sartre, Cooper also states that living in an existentialist way means a ‘constant striving, a perpetual choice; it is marked by radical freedom and responsibility [...]’<sup>28</sup> Leonard’s ‘proem’ explores in a succinct way how humans’ shared existence on earth requires a sense of responsibility towards each other. The use of ‘we’ in this poem illustrates Leonard’s poetic tendency to universalise his needs and identify with others. This poem marks the start of Leonard’s interest in contemporary humanism which he explores in his next collection, *outside the narrative*.

In Leonard’s title poem ‘to have access to the silence’ a manifesto of subjective truths is put forth by the author, calling to mind Kierkegaard’s observation that: ‘the highest truth attainable’ is ‘the concrete and particular concerns of the individual.’ As Aho states, ‘For Kierkegaard, it is only when we live our lives on the basis of these passionate inward commitments that we actually succeed in becoming a self or individual.’<sup>29</sup> Written as a series of statements or even directions, the poem reads as a set of inward commitments that Leonard feels one must adopt in order to realise one’s individuality:

to feel part of the silence that is part of that which shares you and not-you  
to feel not liable to be attacked at an ontological level

to sense being as not being deprived of being  
to sense that is ok, whatever the it is that is a way of describing you

to sense it as being something that includes all of your being from the time

---

<sup>26</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 9

<sup>27</sup> Sartre, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Cooper, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Aho, p. 86.

you were born<sup>30</sup>

The 'silence' Leonard describes is the existential freedom to reflect on one's identity and purpose as being a part of a greater humanity, as seen in the lines: 'to feel part of the silence that is part of that which shares you and not.' Leonard's lines touch upon the essence of existential freedom which is best understood as freedom of 'intention', where one has the freedom to choose how one thinks. As Solomon notes, 'it is our inescapable ability to interpret the world, to give meaning and value to our situation on the basis of our own choosing.'<sup>31</sup> Notions of 'being' are essential to the poem, as the narrator searches for acceptance for all that he is. This sequence of poems, then, proceeds from the desire to create an existential community but can also be seen as a form of protection against criticism as Leonard chooses not to be 'attacked at an ontological level'. By signifying that his existence, or the way he chooses to live, cannot be questioned, he distances himself from mainstream society, even if this separation occurs only within his own mind.

### Field poetics in 'Nine Variations on Larry's Poem'

In the poem sequence 'Nine Variations on Larry's Poem', Leonard uses the device of field poetics to depict an existential encounter between two people. Field poetics speaks of a kinetics achieved by typographically depicting the voice's natural rhythms through capitals, lower cases and spacing and was a term coined by American poet Charles Olson and widely used by the American Black Mountain group. 'Nine Variations on Larry's Poem' can be seen as an experiment in field poetics which illustrates an emotional encounter between two individuals who are united in their shared silence before a song. In 'Larry's Poem', Leonard takes poet Larry Butler's four-line poem and reorganises the line breaks and spacing to alter the narrative delivery of the text and the reader's processing of the text. 'Larry's Poem' is a visual, and if read aloud, aural exercise which challenges traditional versification in order to emphasise the significance of an existential 'moment'. The original four-line text acts as a theme and the following eight poems are variations on that theme. Leonard seems to treat the text as a piece of music, and offers a re-sampling of it in order to alter the prosody, or rhythm, of the text:

<sup>30</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> Solomon, p. 280.

What if we, both you and me, were always listening  
 I mean really listening to the silence – would we hear,  
 really hear and heed the importance of waiting,  
 really waiting for the right moment to begin the song.<sup>32</sup>

Analysing the shifting variations of the poem depends on an understanding of aspects of field poetics. Charles Olson's essay 'Projective Verse' (1950) outlines three principles concerning the transition of a poem's energy from the writer to the reader. His first principle describes the 'kinetics' of a poem. Olson states that a poem is a 'high energy construct' and an 'energy discharge'. When the reader reads the poem, he is receiving the energy and inspiration of the poet when he composed the text. The second principle is 'Form is never more than an extension of content'. The lay-out of this 'energy' on the page is a representation of the poet's retelling of the event. Olson believes this is achievable if the poet follows the principle that the root of the poem conveys and contains the original energy of the poet. The third principle is that one perception is connected to the next perception. As Olson explains in his essay 'Instantaneous, on', each line of poetry must be directly related to the previous, perhaps part of the same thought. Leonard's use of field poetics calls to mind a specific energy with which to project a particular mind frame. This depiction of a precise mind frame is achieved textually, with the aid of a word processor. In Charles Olson's essay 'Projective Verse', he sees the typewriter as the liberator of the voice:

It is the advantage of the typewriter that, due to its rigidity and its space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends. For the first time the poet has the stave and the bar a musician has had.<sup>33</sup>

Olson speaks of a kinetics achieved by typographically depicting the voice's natural rhythms through capitals, lowercases and spacing. The typewriter is a machine which gives the poet control over how the poem is perceived. Olson further states that the reading is controlled through the insertion of space:

If a contemporary poet leaves a space before it, he means that space to be held, by the breath, an equal length of time. If he suspends a word or syllable at the end of the line (this was Cummings's addition) he means that time to pass that it takes the eye – that hair of time suspended to pick up the next line. If he wishes a pause so

---

<sup>32</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 93.

<sup>33</sup> Allen and Friedlander, p. 245.

light it hardly separates the words, yet does not want a comma – which is an interruption of the meaning rather than the sounding of the line – follow him when he uses a symbol the typewriter has ready to hand.<sup>34</sup>

By liberating the poetic voice, the typewriter plays a key role in fostering the poem's natural prosody. The poem is not grounded in a story or narrative but functions as a rhetorical question, and is characterised by an unresolved ending. The narrator expresses the silence of anticipation; a moment before the start of a song. In his variations, Leonard alters the poem's visual presentation shifts and evolves into blocks, columns, sweeping single lines, and crossed and perpendicular structures, all with varying left-hand indent. The different presentations call to mind what Olson wrote to Robert Creeley in the summer of 1953: 'the music of language is meaning'.<sup>35</sup> This statement illuminates how the semantic meaning of Leonard's stanzas changes through the rearrangement of the text. As Leonard shifts and rotates the text, the meaning of the poem shifts the emphasis within particular lines. Stress or significance is placed on specific phrases and words, though these specific phrases change throughout the course of the poem. For example, the first variation contains two block structures by which the poem is divided. White space surrounds the significant couplet: 'the right moment / to begin the song'. Similarly, in the next variation's arrangement in three columns means that the text can be read both vertically and horizontally:

What	if we, both you and me	were always listening
I mean	really listening to the silence –	would we hear,
really hear	and heed the importance	of waiting
really	waiting for the right moment	to begin the song <sup>36</sup>

Altering the text's position on the page emphasises that each moment is different from the previous one. Varying left-hand indent and triplet grouping in the fourth variation allows for stress to fall on the line 'to begin the song'. In the sixth variation, where the text is divided into four narrow parts and two bridging elements, forming an 'H' shape, Leonard highlights the words 'the silence' and 'the song', narrowing the theme to two key words:

<sup>34</sup> Allen and Friedlander, p. 245.

<sup>35</sup> Loss Pequeño Glazier, *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2002) p. 183.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 95.



what	if
we	both
you	and
me	were
al	ways
listen	ing
I mean	really
listen-	ing, to

the silence –

would	we
hear,	really
hear	and heed
the	import-
ance	of wait-
ing,	really
waiting	for the
right	moment
to	begin

the song<sup>37</sup>

Peter Manson comments on the poem's changing formations and praises Leonard's transfer of words to typographic symbols in order to express a sense of loneliness. Manson's comments on the effect of 'brackets' as 'ghosts' of words which represent a silenced and alienated voice:

'Nine Variations on Larry's Poem', contains no words by Leonard at all, communicating instead through relineated and non-linear versions of a four-line poem by Larry Butler. Leonard's voice comes through here as surely as personality subsists in a loved one deprived of their speech: the last, wordless, variation has just the bracketed ( ) ghosts of words, deployed on the page like the notes of a silent music. It's incredibly moving.<sup>38</sup>

Leonard's engagement with the materiality of the text is significant to this sequence, as he illustrates a sense of a detached voice through his treatment of the text's materiality. A pertinent definition of the materiality of text is supplied by John Cayley: 'In a sense the materiality of language arises from the fact of its being **treated** as an object'.<sup>39</sup> In the seventh, eighth and ninth variations, Leonard's dispersion of the text enforce the

<sup>37</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 99.

<sup>38</sup> Manson, p. 70.

<sup>39</sup> Glazier, p. 22.

materiality and physicality of language; the narrative voice or text becomes a collapsible object. In the seventh variation, Leonard does not interfere with the text's surfaces, but in the eighth variation, he bolds and capitalises specific words: 'waiting' and 'hear' and 'SILENCE', 'REALLY', 'LISTENING' and 'WAITING'.<sup>40</sup> In the ninth variation, words are replaced by a series of parentheses. Here, Leonard has used the parentheses as a semantic 'code' to express the words which are missing, as well as a sense of human silence. The pairs of brackets correspond to the words of the text and perform the anticipated silence, allowing the poem's theme to play out. By collapsing, dispersing and removing the text, Leonard enhances the importance of breathing and breath in voice as means of distinguishing us as human:

( ) ( )  
 ( ) [ ] ( )  
 ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )  
 [ ]  
 ( ) ( ) ( )<sup>41</sup>

These narrative characteristics imply that the each step of the sequence is not only an independent poem but part of a process. Again, Leonard's work is canvas-like; his use of the page's white space allows for engagements with text and shape to intersect in a codified presentation which expresses a shared moment between two individuals.

'Nine Variations on Larry's Poem' can be seen as re-shapings of an existential encounter, as the poem depicts a shared instance between the two people in which they examine their futility of their existence, as they contemplate the meaning of a moment. Leonard voices the separation and tension in the moments between 'silence' and 'song'. In reference to the book's title *access to the silence*, the narrator in the poem encourages his companion to embrace the silence before the song which appears to be a metaphor for mindful thinking. In the re-ordering of verse which contains a specific moment, the sequence functions as a short textual experiment typical of Leonard's oeuvre.

<sup>40</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 100.

<sup>41</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 102.

## Field Poetics in ‘Hesitations: monologues for dancing’

Leonard’s sequence ‘Hesitations: monologues for dancing’ describes a character who feels estranged from his environment and who is angered by the social perceptions of his working-class Glasgow accent. This sequence describes the narrator’s existential journey from estrangement and alienation to an external release of anger. By the close of the sequence, the narrator learns that he has the freedom to determine his own identity, as seen by the closing lines: and that it is up to him to carry out the necessary changes in his life. As Cooper states, ‘Human beings are prone to experience estrangement from the world in which they live, and it is this sense of estrangement which has long inspired philosophical attempts to locate human existence in relation to the order of things.’<sup>42</sup> ‘Hesitations: monologues for dancing’ uses field poetics to depict and emphasise the narrator’s feelings of social alienation. This freedom is later realised by Leonard’s use of stylistics such as arrows to indicate an internal release.

‘Hesitations’ was originally a longer piece commissioned for the Traverse Theatre in the 1980s. As Leonard explains in his online journal: ‘I had suggested a free-flowing narrative that mixed episodes of conversation, pre-recorded tapes, and somehow, the use of dance and visual space. The commission was never realised [...]’<sup>43</sup> The original commission was forty-eight vignettes and was later published in the online magazine *onedit*. From these fragments, Leonard selected eleven and included them in *access to the silence*. ‘Hesitations’ contains a fragmented narrative which is characterised by the use of hesitant, repetitive, strangled, fumbling speech. The function of the speech is to characterise the narrator’s lack of confidence and the socially marginalised position which he believes he inhabits. The fumbling speech is an ironic rendering of class expectations associated with Glaswegian dialect; the narrator’s constant mumbling and lack of clarity is a statement of his background. The narrator’s lack of confidence is shown in the first few mumbings where the termination of a relationship is implied:

a dunno wiz jist thi way she sort uv

a dunno

---

<sup>42</sup> Cooper, p. 30.

<sup>43</sup> Tom Leonard, ‘A Traverse Sequence’, *onedit*, issue 15 (January 2010) pp. 1-43 (p. 2), <<http://www.onedit.net/issue15/toml/toml.pdf>> [accessed 1 June 2012].

been a long while anyway  
fourteen year<sup>44</sup>

A sense of social alienation is seen here in the narrator's bitter grumblings about feeling unsupported and alone in society. As Cooper states: 'Alienated men, in sum, are doomed at some point to feel divorced from their own bodies and from their fellows; and to regard the world, devoid of meaning and value, as an order to which they are quite inessential, and in which they cannot realise their freedom.' Leonard's narrator speaks bitterly of a collective establishment which he feels does not care about its citizens:

why bothir though?  
who knows whut goes on n their heads?  
do you think they care aboot us?  
ahm no so sure  
a think yiv got tay live in a place  
thats whut a think  
yiv goat ti live there  
huv thi  
experience<sup>45</sup>

However, Cooper also states that it is this feeling of alienation that 'drives men on to overcome it'.<sup>46</sup> In the narrator's journey towards release, acceptance and freedom, he proclaims his anger towards the established authorities, which rises to full volume with Leonard's insertion of capitals:

day we talk aboot that then  
ur do we no talk aboot that  
is that wan a they things no ti be said  
wid that be breakin thi fuckin code  
BREAKIN THE FUCKIN CODE AYE  
naw  
oh naw<sup>47</sup>

These excerpts of poetry are not included in Leonard's abridged version of 'Hesitations' in *access to the silence*. This can be viewed as a mistake as the existential depth of 'Hesitations' is not fully realised due to the small number of excerpts that are included.

---

<sup>44</sup> Leonard, *A Traverse Sequence*, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Leonard, *A Traverse Sequence*, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Cooper, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> Leonard, *A Traverse Sequence*, p. 6.

However, though it is an abridged version of the original ‘Hesitations’, the sequence still follows a similar trajectory from a place of isolation to one of hope, where the narrator recognises that he has the freedom to choose his identity. The poem involves linked dialogues and monologues in which two people seem to be discussing how they spend their day. Lines such as ‘so whut day yi day yi yirself then ih / whut day yi day these days’ and ‘same time yi wunnir / least ah day’ illustrate the mundane nature of daily life.<sup>48</sup> In the subsequent poem, Leonard’s anger is directed at the establishment in the urban phonetic dialect style of *Intimate Voices*:

a dont give a shite  
fur any a thim

a dont give a  
a dogs turd

supposin  
supposin thi entire

fuckin lot  
and all thir fuckin wurks  
an poms

copped it  
copped thi fuckin

whole thing  
smack

it would serve  
it would serve thim

Following these poems which are redolent with hostility and anger, Leonard starts to suggest a release of tension through the dispersion of text. Lapses or hesitations between words are also represented through the white space

yi

maybe

cz

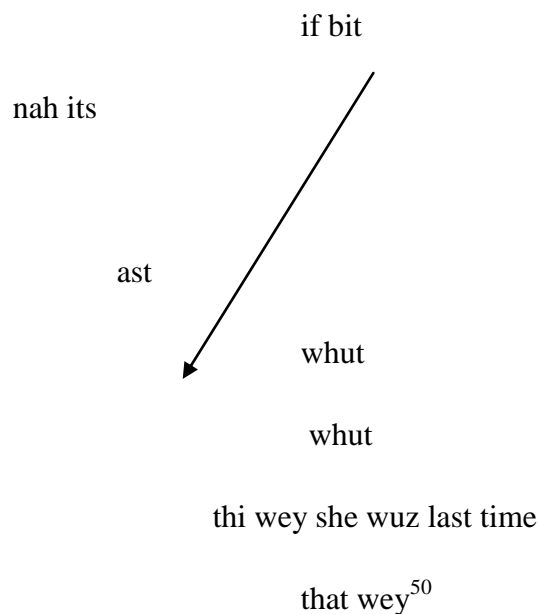
---

<sup>48</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 18.

how

don't be ridiculous<sup>49</sup>

The sequence contains a rolling dialogue narrative with lines which comment on social isolation and urban phonetic dialect makes a direct point about the association between class and language. Leonard builds on the character's sense of rage and despair with the insertion of paralinguistic 'lines and arrows' in the fifth and sixth poems. Sarah Broom is unsure of how to place the arrows into context but decides they are a mark of frustration: 'The significance of the arrows and lines is difficult to determine; they seem almost arbitrary products of the frustration of the attempt at expression, with phrases such as 'nah its' and 'a mean' preceding them':



Similarly, Peter Manson contends that since 'Hesitations' is a dramatic monologue, the lines and arrows are 'silent gestures' which Leonard re-enacts in performance. Following an existential line of thinking, it is conceivable that the arrows symbolise the narrator's release of tension, his movement from a previously stagnant place of isolation to one of

<sup>49</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 26.

<sup>50</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 23.

self-identity. A realisation of self-identity is illustrated in the closing lines where the narrator convinces himself

thingz change  
theyll change

yon wey thit  
ti didny notice

it thi time <sup>51</sup>

*Hesitations* is a significant sequence in Leonard's oeuvre as it sees a convergence between Leonard's use of urban phonetic dialect as a subversive statement on the language prejudice facing the working-classes and his interest in exploring the boundaries of human freedom and the depths of social alienation.

### Leonard's poster poems

Leonard's work in his poster poems continues the theme of locating existential freedom despite constraints set by the politically powerful, such as those in authority in government or educational establishments. As Aho states: 'Who we are is not determined by any underlying trait or characteristic that we are born with. It is, rather, up to the individual to shape his or her identity by choosing certain projects and taking action in the world.'<sup>52</sup> It can be argued that Leonard's use of poetry which encourages living by existentialist principles is his method of 'taking action in the world' against societal attitudes which he believes infringe on a person's sense of freedom. The nine poster poems and triptych within *access to the silence* are examples of how Leonard uses computer-generated images to express a sense of frustration at the strictures on freedom and individuality. In this collection, Leonard began to exhibit a reliance on word processors in order to achieve specific typographies, deploy non-linear spacing and create graphic images to represent significant themes in his poetry. Focusing on the materiality of language, Leonard employs a 'cut-and-paste' technique using varied fonts and images inspired by newspapers and

<sup>51</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> Aho, p. 63.

other media. The expansion of technology, specifically the advancements of word processors, has enabled Leonard to devise new ways of presenting and manipulating text. The end result is a defamiliarising, juxtaposed text reminiscent of a ‘cut-and-paste’ collage. Using images and fonts taken from templates found in daily life, Leonard mimics authoritative fonts in his poster poems to battle the elitist and alienating coding of literature which threaten human freedom, and therefore, a person’s ability to form and understand their own identity. The cut-and-paste techniques employed in Leonard’s concrete poetry have similarities with the *poésié trouvée* movement in Scotland pioneered by Edwin Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay in 1963. Edwin Morgan’s ‘Newspoems’ utilised the method of cut-up phrases from random sources. His technique can be traced from an ‘early modernist French tradition of picking poetry out of unexpected contexts – *poésié trouvée* – as well as of a formalist collage technique going back to nascent Soviet times.’<sup>53</sup> Morgan’s ‘Newspoems’ are instructive when compared to Leonard’s work. In Morgan’s ‘Newspoems’, he cut phrases from newspapers ‘and other ephemera’, pasted them to sheets of paper and photographed them. Morgan sought to highlight the textual relationship between medium and message, stating that: ‘I began looking deliberately for such hidden messages and picking those that had some sort of arresting quality, preferably with a visual or typographical element itself a part of the “point”, although this was not always possible.’

The collection *access to the silence* includes an ergonomically linguistic fable which maps the relationship between literature teaching in schools and the upper-class canonisation of English literature. Dubbed ‘An Old Story’, the formal tone and high register is a deliberate mockery of the linguistic institutions Leonard speaks of. The owning of literature as cultural property through the examination system and literature teaching has been widely discussed in Leonard’s prose. It is illustrative of negative cultural assumptions towards the working-class accent, and posits these assumptions as barriers impinging on one’s sense of identity and freedom:

They invented the concept, and then they invented the concept of their own ownership, of it. They invented the institutions from within which they lent out things to see if others could replicate their fitness-to-own. Fitness to own, they said,

---

<sup>53</sup> Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory since 1960* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 109.



resided in their ability to say why and how a thing was or was not a thing-within-the-concept.<sup>54</sup>

Leonard's poster poems relate to existentialism in that they explore the human's position in society and protest against any kind of criticism which infringes on a person's sense of self. As Kevin Aho states, existentialist freedom means that 'whatever our factual limitations - whether it is our genetic code, our socioeconomic backgrounds, our religious or family history - they do not ultimately determine who we are.'<sup>55</sup> In the poster poems 'An Oxford Dictionary' and 'The Blessed Trinity' Leonard criticises the relationship between the established authorities and their use of language as property to own, as this represents an affront to human freedom. Through aping the fonts and phrases used in dictionaries and public signs, Leonard illustrates how educational establishments who use the Oxford dictionary believe that other forms of language are of lesser value. Leonard critiques cultural attitudes in the poster poem 'An Oxford Dictionary' which reverses one's semantic expectations of a familiar book cover:

AN  
 OXFORD  
 DICTIONARY  
 OF  
 AN  
 ENGLISH  
 LANGUAGE<sup>56</sup>

The upper-case font and repetition of the indefinite article suggests the uniformity of language found in the Oxford dictionary, while undermining its authority by suggesting that there are other possible dictionaries within the English language. Leonard has a similar engagement with materiality of language in his poster poems on modern warfare. In 'Blessed Trinity', he merges the definite article of the English language with the holy trinity of Christianity. This poster poem reads:

---

<sup>54</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 15.

<sup>55</sup> Aho, p. 64.

<sup>56</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 14.

THE is the father

this is the holy spirit

a is the son<sup>57</sup>

The poem's layout slopes eastward and we become aware of a hierarchy – father, holy spirit and son – derived from the Roman Catholic theology of the Trinity. These are topics that Leonard returns to frequently. He has already presented his analogy of news presentation and 'gospel' in his article 'What I hate about the news is its definite article' and the pamphlet *On the Mass Bombing of Iraq and Kuwait, Commonly Known as The Gulf war with Leonard's Shorter Catechism* (1993), The British public's lack of knowledge of its government's actions carried out in its name results in two more, angry poster poems Leonard models them after objects found in everyday life. Speaking of the significance of written language, Leonard states:

I think this business of whether or not somebody is invisible in the language, and the truth just comes through that has application in the actual printed word. And the way that headlines, or different types of font, create a certain ... they create a certain kind of voice, an assumption of how you interpret what you see. The bigger the headline on a poster, you assume it's important.<sup>58</sup>

The materiality of the poster poem is evident in its satirical mimicking of a news headline. Emboldened and shaped into a narrow column, a kinetic energy is evident from the downward-thrusting text:

MISSILES

LAUNCHED

FROM

MORAL

HIGH

---

<sup>57</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 64.

<sup>58</sup> Leonard, 'tom leonard on language and social status', 20 March 2011.

GROUND<sup>59</sup>

Leonard's poster poems mimic the style and format of mass media in order to subvert patriarchal, cultural assumptions about class, status and language. Michael Gardiner's observation that the 'reader is aware of the image at all times' is echoed in Leonard's manipulation of text into familiar media forms which causes the reader to be aware of the poster poem's image before attention is drawn to the text.<sup>60</sup> Another aspect of Leonard's work is his poster poems which use digital formatting. Glazier notes that the 'transmission' of text from writer to reader is equally important as the act of creation. The inspiration, creation and transmission of a text are parts of the text's entire 'meaning-making'.<sup>61</sup> 'Meaning-making', according to Glazier, is the cognitive exercise where one takes into account not only the content of the text but how the materials, writing and transmission interrelate.

The poem implies the loss of one's innocence to predatory adults, though in a way not explicitly stated. In this poster poem, the text and image share a symbiotic relationship. Left on its own, Leonard's fragmented and enigmatic text may not give the reader enough information to access the poem's theme. However, the addition of the photo provides the poem with a narrative starting point. The poem is written for the picture, and without the picture the poem would not be as powerful. A sense of the child's alienation from society is conveyed by the lower-case letters and short lines surrounded by empty white space.

Leonard's poster poems rely heavily on digital formatting in their integration of images to convey individuals afflicted by a sense of social alienation. The poster poem 'Triptych' relates to existential freedom in its critique of limitations on the human experience. The sense of alienation and separation which emerges from these two poster poems is further developed in the 'Triptych: an ongoing memorial'. Here Leonard critiques the human experience within narratives dictated by the powerful. In 'Triptych', there is a sense of a moving or rolling narrative, as seen in the poster poems' evolving appearances. In the first panel, the lower-cased and italicised text reads clearly: 'For those of us who have to live / outside the narrative'. The second panel contains the same phrase but is

---

<sup>59</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 41.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory since 1960* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 111.

<sup>61</sup> Glazier, p. 32.

obliterated by spiky triangular shapes. In the last panel the phrase is almost entirely blocked by a large rectangle, suggesting the complete transformation of the narrator's gradual alienation from mainstream society. *access to the silence* marks the peak of Leonard's integration of existential philosophy into his poems. In these works, Leonard appeals to alienated individuals to locate and identify opportunities for existential freedom in their daily lives. *access to the silence* is an unified collection which develops a link between the title poem and the collection's overall theme of an individual's right of choice. The main message of the collection is made clear in the closing poster poem. This poster poem functions as a parting piece of advice to readers. Set in large typeset, the poem poster reads:

that each  
one be the  
subject of  
their own  
narration

as to  
become  
verb<sup>62</sup>

Leonard's visual poems and poster poems express frustration on behalf of those who are alienated from a mainstream narrative in terms of how to live socially, financially, and culturally and the ways in which they are dictated to by the media, the government and the educational establishment. Leonard explores this through a new interest in textual production fonts and spacing. Despite the inclusion of poetry sequences which, characteristically, appeared in other collections *access to the silence* is a transformative chapter in Leonard's career, in terms of a contemporary approach to writing poetry. The collection is pivotal for converging and interacting reasons. He embraces a new wave of visual poetics, especially field and concrete poetics, which allow for a greater creativity in the presentation of marginalised voices and continues his shift into a more domestic sphere with poems which feature couples and families. *access to the silence* also marks the peak of Leonard's integration of existential philosophy into his poems and his idealistic appeal to like-minded individuals to locate and identify opportunities for existential freedom in their daily lives.

---

<sup>62</sup> Leonard, *access to the silence*, p. 136.

### Humanism in *outside the narrative*

Just as existentialism informed the poetry of *access to the silence*, humanism is a key to understanding *outside the narrative*. Poems in *access to the silence* see Leonard aspiring to a sense of existential freedom in daily life and fictively searching for group of like-minded others who share his concerns about alienation and the preservation of one's identity. Leonard's focus on building such a community ultimately leads to his declaring that he has located a universal voice and identified the qualities of a universal humanism. Leonard's views on humanism builds on Sartre's idea in *Existentialism is a Humanism* that existentialism should 'make every man conscious of who he is, and to make him solely responsible for his own existence. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.'<sup>63</sup> In the poem 'Being a Human Being', Leonard speaks of the responsibility individual humans have to the rest of humanity. However, Leonard's view of humanism is limited and seems to only include those who share his political and philosophical viewpoints.

This part of the chapter argues that Leonard's application of humanism in his work only applies under certain limiting conditions that Leonard himself dictates. It applies, for instance, to victims of warfare or to political prisoners such as Moredecai Vanunu, causes which evoke a strong sense of sympathy in Leonard. However, Leonard's strong views on subjects such as language discrimination and literature limit his humanist gestures towards the universal, because they lead him to reject certain forms of literature and language-use which he sees as oppressive or discriminatory. Though Leonard identifies himself 'A humanist' in the poem of the same name, some of his poetry does not reflect the universality he lays claim to, but rather a particular view of how socially and economically underprivileged people should be treated.

Leonard's poems select principles of humanism, particularly the idea that like-minded and socially-conscious individuals should band together. In Leonard's view of humanism, these individuals would use their intellectual freedom for good; they would collectively protect others from various forms of persecution and use their individual talents they have to promote free expression, as Leonard does in his poetry. Leonard's

---

<sup>63</sup> Sartre, p. 23.

view of humanism echoes that of Richard Norman's who states that 'as human beings we can find from our own resources the shared moral values which we need in order to live together, and the means to create meaningful and fulfilling lives for ourselves.'<sup>64</sup>

However, a problem with Leonard's humanism is his insistence that he has identified qualities of the universal human while at the same time insisting that these qualities be particular ones.

Though limited by his own preferences, Leonard's manifestations of humanism generally chime with the characteristics of secular humanism of 'respect for other humans' and 'a willingness to improve the world'.<sup>65</sup> In the introduction to 'On Humanism', Richard Norman discusses some basic ideas of humanism as derived from Giovanni Pico: 'A limited nature in other creatures is confined within the laws written down by us. In conformity with thy free judgment, in whose hands I have placed thee, thou art confined by no bounds; and thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself.'<sup>66</sup> Pico argues that humans are not bound to a conditioned nature, but have the capacity to think and choose, and this elevates them above other species. Norman supports Pico with Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not A Christian and The Faith of a Rationalist*: 'We want to stand upon our own feet and look fair and square the world – its good facts, its bad facts, its beauties, and its ugliness; see the world as it is, and be not afraid of it. Conquer the world by intelligence, and not merely by being slavishly subdued by the terror that comes from it.'<sup>67</sup> Like Pico, Russell proposes that despite the reality of life, humans have the intelligence to use their freedom for good. Norman's own definition of humanism illustrates how personal, and yet universal, the concept can be. Norman first acknowledges that humanism is a broad concept and contains 'no humanist creed, no set of beliefs to which every humanist has to subscribe. Humanism is not a dogma or a sect.' This open view of humanism may suit Leonard, who applies a particularised humanist outlook that works on behalf of those alienated from society.

Leonard's most recent poems, some previously published in the pamphlet *Being a Human Being*, evoke a limited humanist viewpoint. The title poem 'Being a Human Being'

---

<sup>64</sup> Richard Norman, *On Humanism*, second edn (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), p. 24.

<sup>65</sup> Herrick, p. 3.

<sup>66</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man and Other Works*, trans. by Charles Glen Wallis, with an introduction by Paul J.W. Miller (Indianapolis and New York, 1965), pp. 4-5.

<sup>67</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not A Christian and The Faith of a Rationalist, Why I am not a Christian: and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (Routledge: London, 2004), p. 26.

was written for Mordechai Vanunu who was named Glasgow University's Rector in 2005. Born in Marrakesh, Vanunu was an Israeli weapons technician who, on the basis of his opposition to his country's nuclear arms programme, revealed classified information to the British press. He was subsequently lured to Italy by a Mossad agent, and then abducted by Israeli agents and he spent over twenty years in prison. In an interview with David Crow, Leonard describes how his poem about Vanunu had been criticised by his peers at Glasgow University. Speaking generally, Leonard states that some unnamed members of staff at Glasgow University did not appreciate Leonard's own 'impassioned speech and poetry reading' at the installation of Rector Mordechai Vanunu. Leonard's words 'unsettled some university bosses' and one of them stated that Leonard was 'taking licence' with his comments. Leonard's reputation as angry dissenter is evident in his defiant reaction:

I was glad Vanunu was getting the rector job and [referring to Academic robes] I even put my Batman outfit on, which I wouldn't normally do. I didn't speak out of turn at all and when we're talking about someone who has been in jail for over twenty years then little light remarks at after dinner speeches are not what I want to hear.<sup>68</sup>

Like the poem 'access to the silence' which begins as a series of inward commitments, Leonard's poem to Vanunu begins with a list of statements. Leonard makes these statements particular to Vanunu's situation, a fact which allows the poem to lose lyricism:

not to be complicit  
not to accept everyone else is silent

not to keep one's mouth shut to hold onto one's job  
not to accept public language as cover and decoy

not to put friends and family before the rest of the world  
not to say I am wrong when you know the government is

not to be just a bought behaviour pattern  
to accept the moment and a fact of choice

These lines read as a supportive summary of Vanunu's humanistic actions. To close the poem, Leonard issues a general statement of what he feels humanism means in six lines:

I am a human being

---

<sup>68</sup> Crow, p. 10.

and I exist

a human being  
and a citizen of the world

responsible to that world  
– and responsible for that world <sup>69</sup>

The lines above also embody the inclusive, anti-war attitude that Leonard argues for in the poems 'Plasma Nights' and 'Blair's Britain'. Leonard encourages others to be aware of how political conflict in remote parts of the world also affects one's local environment. In these poems, Leonard insists that there is common ground between us and the political plights of others. His outsider's perspective and sympathy with the persecuted is seen in the shifting, non-linear verses and introspective tone of a poem about war reporting on television, 'Plasma Nights':

privileged  
by bombs  
we occupy

the dominant narrative  
for subjects

faraway  
who may envy us  
if seen  
on their screen <sup>70</sup>

In other poems which seem to contain humanist themes, however, there is a sense that Leonard is not fulfilling the humanist doctrine of accepting, and living beside, people of different beliefs. As previously mentioned, Leonard identified qualities of the universal human while insisting that these qualities be particular ones. He speaks of expressing the voice of the universal human through the use of lower case and calculated spacing on the page. The language politics evident in certain poems are explored in detail in Leonard's seminal essay in the *Edinburgh Review*: 'The Common Breath: a poetic tradition'. The first paragraph argues that the roots of language politics are in constructivism:

---

<sup>69</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 204.

<sup>70</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 197.



The politics of space on the page is a politics of democracy, of transference from world of text as ‘the’ to that of reader-subject as ‘this’. It is the universalisation of the author-reader experience away from the world of passing-the-parcel to those fit to open the parcels of cultural referents of supposedly universal value (which opening of parcels has been the industry of literary-academic exegesis this past hundred years); towards the structuring of a system of common breath, integer of the universal human.<sup>71</sup>

Leonard’s opening paragraph argues that typographical devices, reflected in the work of poets like William Carlos Williams and e.e. cummings, are the way to finding and isolating a universal voice. At the end of ‘The Common Breath’, Leonard argues that the method of successfully breaking poetic tradition and identifying the voice of the universal human, is for poets to be both musical and democratic in their use of spacing, line breaks and punctuation. Leonard states that through the use of typography, the page becomes a portal for the reader to hear the poet’s voice, or for the poet to enact the timbres of his own voice. Leonard describes the process as: ‘democracy of breath, actuated by eye and ear in the private agora of a page shared between reader and writer.’<sup>72</sup> His aim is to identify the voice of the universal human through experimentation with line breaks and spacing and put these strategies to work in the poems ‘Suite: On the page’ and ‘the case for lower case’. In these poems, Leonard argues that the way forward is through experimentation with spacing and line breaks so that poetry becomes a depiction of one’s voice.

The long poem ‘On the page’ explores and encourages such non-linear narratives to establish universal voice on the page. The sequence argues that British literature inhabits a conservative and patriarchal narrative in their use of language:

whoever invented this position  
this way of being  
- living on the page

in a voice that nobody knows, not  
wants to know: who invented it,  
who invented all this

this at least we do together  
not  
“the royal we” you know

---

<sup>71</sup> Leonard, ‘The Common Breath’, p. 48.

<sup>72</sup> Leonard, ‘The Common Breath’, p. 60.

but<sup>73</sup>

Leonard describes the tenets (and benefits) of using one's ability to be free in the next stanza:

this is the way  
I think we want it  
to operate: not

crowding the page  
as some larger font

but using simply  
that which seems  
easiest on the eye,

having in mind  
the relative possibilities

of particular spacing, hallmark  
of that lowercase tradition  
we long admire<sup>74</sup>

In the poem 'the case for lower case', Leonard illustrates how poetry in lower case can be visually freeing and collective, and in those respects can represent a sense of the 'universal' human. The gnomic appearance of language in lower case, feels to Leonard, closer to expressing an individual's subjective view of their own reality:

lower case gives you space to live

lower case makes peace with the living<sup>75</sup>

He enacts the relationship between breath and lower case when in the poem he concludes:

hmm  
always here  
as natural as breathing

lower space....lower space.... lower space....lower space<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 175.

<sup>74</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 175.

<sup>75</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 179.

<sup>76</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 179.

However, this same poem identifies and criticises 'capitalism' in literature – both as a philosophy and as a stylistic choice – and this constrains Leonard from a more broadly based humanistic outlook:

the CAPITALIST SENTENCE has the subject as line-manager of the verb

the CAPITALIST SENTENCE has no room in which to move

the CAPITALIST SENTENCE the world comes to full stop

THE CAPITALIST SENTENCE IS A DEATH SENTENCE.<sup>77</sup>

Leonard's refusal to accept what he sees as an offensive counter-system of language harks back to the angry poems in *Intimate Voices* and his critique of the relationship between upper-class language and established authorities. Still, a sense of Leonard seeing himself as the universal human persists and is evident again in *The Iliad*-inspired sequence 'Three Types of Envoi'. These poems appear to be autobiographical in content and expresses Leonard's assessment of himself as an outsider. Poems entitled 'Odysseus', 'A humanist' and 'A life' contain lower-case lettering, wide spaces indicating breath and pause, and a blend of short and long lines. The poem 'A humanist' refers to Leonard's Irish heritage and the Catholic upbringing and illustrates that Leonard feels alienated from both the culture he inherited and the religion and culture he was born into:

The son of an immigrant, he had eschewed the culture of his father as also that of the land into which he was born.

The religion of his father was once the religion of the indigenous natives, but they had rejected and overthrown it.

And the son was yet seen as of that tribe which corroded the native culture and language<sup>78</sup>

Leonard eventually finds home in a sense of universal belonging and the battle against pre-existing narratives that project a false sense of inclusion:

But from within he came to realize himself as an instance of the universal human.

---

<sup>77</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 179.

<sup>78</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 213.

The universal human is inclusive and absolute, there is no individual outside it.

The sense of the universal human is the home of all those who have won through to become themselves<sup>79</sup>

In 'A humanist', Leonard imagines that he is a part of a greater collective of people who share his values. His work has been dominated by a quest to identify a certain type of alienated individual and, latterly, to gather them around him. While Leonard considers that he has identified the qualities and speech of a universal human, his interest in humanism can be interpreted as a further expression of his sense of alienation, linked less to a universal love of humanity and more to an affinity with a like-minded community identified by the poet himself. In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre states: 'When we say that man chooses himself, not only do we mean that each of us must choose himself, but also that in choosing himself, he is choosing for all men [...] Our responsibility is thus much greater than we might have supposed, because it concerns all mankind'.<sup>80</sup> Sartre even goes so far to say that if he decides 'to marry and have children', he is also committing 'not only myself and but all of humanity, to the practice of monogamy.' Sartre's sweeping statements seem to overstate the profound effect of his individual actions on humanity. Leonard shares this inflated notion of the weight and importance of his own humanistic views. His limiting and selective views of human responsibility, as expressed particularly in 'Being a Human Being', appear to use the word 'citizen' in the phrase: 'a human being / and a citizen of the world' as shorthand for other male individuals who hold similar beliefs. Though Leonard's *outside the narrative* is filled with problematic expectations concerning existentialism and humanism, it is through this particular philosophical gaze that he continues his exploration of the alienated persona.

---

<sup>79</sup> Leonard, *outside the narrative*, p. 213.

<sup>80</sup> Sartre, p. 24.

## Conclusion

Tom Leonard's output is relatively small and initially I was wary of creating a critical framework around it where none existed. However, a holistic reading of his work as poet, anthologist, biographer and prose writer across a forty year period demonstrated to me that there is one area of intellectual consistency. Leonard repeatedly explores the socially or self-alienated voice in a variety of contexts and forms, ranging from the sexually aggressive 'hardmen' in *Intimate Voices* to the depiction of fragile wife and mother Nora in *nora's place*. Some of his poetry is highly visual in its insertion of lines, arrows and varied fonts, as well as the incorporation of field and concrete poetics, which this thesis argues, are devices that he often used to explore issues of personal and social alienation. His work can be read as a critique of the social, cultural and political limits which impact on a person's sense of identity and belonging.

Leonard's presentation of marginalised voices, include his hand-picked company of poets alienated by politics, class, gender, and sexuality in the anthology *Radical Renfrew*, as well as his critique of negative cultural perceptions of the Glasgow working-class accent in *Intimate Voices*, often evinces anger and frustration from those who feel their lives have been unfairly marginalised. It is fitting, then, that Chapter Five ends the thesis with an exploration of the ways in which Leonard integrates concepts of existential freedom and human responsibility into his poetry and uses them to explore how cultural expectations press on individuals in terms of education, politics and socio-economic status. It is significant that Leonard's selected and collected book of poems, which can be seen as containing the poems that he feels aesthetically and contextually represent his career, should be entitled *outside the narrative*; a title which strongly suggests his support for those whose stories are not being told.

Prior to this study, critical analyses of Leonard's poetry have been narrowly focused on his early poetry in urban dialect and his representations of Glasgow, working-class male identity. The relatively uncharted territory of my thesis, the first to examine Leonard's work holistically, allowed me to broaden the terms of Leonard's work into areas like existentialism and humanism; his application of psychological theories of ontological

security to his poetry; and his status as an innovative poet working in both Glaswegian urban phonetic dialect and English who manipulates text on the page to depict the marginalised voice. My thesis is also the first to read Leonard's anthology *Radical Renfrew* as a study in alienation as well as radical politics and argue that it acted as a kind of forerunner to his depiction of the fragmented, alienated poet James Thomson in the biography *Places of the Mind*. My research revealed that Leonard does not present the concept of alienation in the same way in each book or collection; rather his approach to and treatment of the theme adapts to both the social context and geography of the book. The texts used in this thesis, *Intimate Voices*, *Radical Renfrew*, *Places of the Mind*, *Reports From the Present*, *access to the silence* and *outside the narrative*, have been examined sequentially and this chronological analysis of this thesis allowed for Leonard's creative periods to be noted in detail and for his use of social and self alienation to be identified and explored.

This thesis demonstrates that Leonard has made a contribution to Scottish Literature that extends well beyond his early poetry in urban phonetic dialect. His output may be small, but includes poems in both Glaswegian urban dialect and Standard English, prose essays, anthology and biography. My holistic reading of his work concluded that one area of intellectual consistency across forty years was his repeated attempts to find new and innovative ways to express an alienated voice.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### Works by Tom Leonard

#### Articles, poems and videos

Leonard, Tom, 'Eleven Poems', *Akros*, 6 (1971), 19-24

— 'Yon Night', 'And You', 'A Summer's Day', 'A Soup Song, Sir?' 'Feed Ma Lamz',  
*Akros*, 9 (1975), 96-97

— 'Mater Tenebrarum: A Study of James Thomson (1834-82) "Bysshe Vanolis"',  
*Edinburgh Review* (1985), 47-60

— 'The New Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams', *Edinburgh Review*, 85 (1990),  
62-71

— 'Poet's Personal Myth Reaches out to History', *Herald Scotland*, 21 April 1993,  
p. 10

— 'Bitter Terminus of a Dream Tradition', *Herald Scotland*, 05 March 1994, p.17

— 'The Common Breath: A poetic tradition', *Edinburgh Review*, 126 (2009) 48-60

— 'Tom Leonard on language and social status', uploaded on 20 March 2011,  
<[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=YMZajJ01lQ8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=YMZajJ01lQ8)>  
[accessed 10 September 2012]

— 'Blessed trinity2.mov', uploaded on 20 March, 2011,  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyGjoVIVG88&list=UUxoXbPR3mjvx>  
oEaoEzR61Ew&index=8> [accessed 10 September 2012]

— 'Mother Courage and Her Children: Four Songs by Berthold Brecht translated by Tom  
Leonard' *Scottish Review of Books*, Vol. 8 Issue 1 (2012), 9

#### Pamphlets and collections

— *Six Glasgow Poems* (Glasgow: Midnight Press, 1969)

— *A Priest Came on at Merkland Street* (Glasgow: Midnight Press, 1970)

— *Poems* (Dublin: E&T O'Brien, 1973)

— *Bunnit Husslin* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1975)

— *Three Glasgow Writers* (Glasgow: Molendinar Press, 1976)

— *My Name Is Tom* (Glasgow: National Book League, 1978)

- *If Only Bunty Was Here: A Drama Sequence of Totally Undramatic Non-Sequiturs* (Glasgow: Print Studio Press, 1979)
- *Ghostie Men* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1980)
- *Situations Theoretical and Contemporary* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1983)
- *Satires and Profanities* (Glasgow, STUC: 1984)
- *Intimate Voices: 1965-1983* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1984)
- *Two Members' Monologues; and, a Handy Form for Artists for Use in Connection with the City of Culture* (Glasgow: Edward Polin Press, 1989)
- *nora's place* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1990)
- *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990)
- *On the Mass Bombing of Iraq and Kuwait, Commonly Known as 'the Gulf War' with Leonard's Shorter Catechism* (Stirling: AK Press, 1991)
- *Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson ( 'B.V. ' )* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993)
- *Reports from the Present: Selected Work 1982-94* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995)
- *Etruscan Reader 5* (with Bill Griffiths and Tom Raworth) (Devon: Etruscan Books, 1997)
- *access to the silence: poems and posters, 1984-2004* (Buckfastleigh: Etruscan Books, 2004)
- *inside looking in* (Glasgow: Survivors Press, 2004)
- *Being a Human Being: And Other Poems* (Glasgow: Object Permanence, 2006)
- *outside the narrative: selected work 1965-2009* ( Buckfastleigh: Etruscan Books, 2009)
- *Definite Articles: Selected Prose 1973-2012* (Edinburgh: Word Power Books, 2013)
- *Mother Courage and her Children*, original play by Bertolt Brecht (Middlesborough: Smokestack Books, 2014)

### **Interviews with Tom Leonard**

Boddy, Kasia and Barry Wood, 'Tom Leonard Interviewed in Glasgow', *Edinburgh Review*, 77 (1985), 59 -71

Cockburn, Ken, 'Tom Leonard Interviewed by Ken Cockburn', *Verse*, 8 (1994), 62-66

Crow, David, 'An intimate voice', *Glasgow Guardian*, 21 November 2005, p. 10



- Dósa, Atilla, 'Interview with Tom Leonard', *Scottish Studies Review*, Vol. 5 Issue 2 (Autumn 2004), 69-83
- Goring, Rosemary, 'Verbal Remedies', *Herald Scotland*, 1 August 2009, pp. 14-15
- Macpherson, Hugh, 'Scottish Writers: Tom Leonard,' BBC (1989), p. 16-18
- Renton, Jennie, 'Honest Words', *Sunday Herald*, 'Seven Day' Supplement, 5 September 2004, p. 11
- Stephen, Dan, 'Talking to Tom Leonard', < [www.variant.co.uk](http://www.variant.co.uk) > [accessed 31 October 2012]
- Sunshine, Dee, 'What Makes Poets Tick?' <<http://www.rimbaud.org.uk/q-leonard.html>> [accessed 29 September 2010]

### Reviews of Tom Leonard's books

- anonymous, 'Difficult Perceptions', *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 November 1978, p.2
- Batchelor, Paul, 'The right to "speak proper"', *Guardian*, 3 October 2009, p. 14
- Bell, Ian 'No Patter Merchant' *Scottish Review of Books*, Vol. 5 Issue 3 (October 2009) p. 3
- Buchan, Tom, *Aquarius*, 6 (1973), 1-2
- Cockburn, Ken 'Review of nora's place', *Lines Review*, No. 117 (June 1991), 55-58
- 'Towards This Particular Place: Tom Leonard's Places of the Mind and Its Relationship to His Earlier Works', *Verse*, 11 (1994), 120-26
- Crotty, Patrick, 'Dread, drink and despair: James Thomson's struggle against a Godless, crack-down universe', *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 March 1993, p. 4
- 'Language, Rage and Class', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 July 1995, p. 12
- Finlay, Alex, 'The embodiment of knowledge', *Edinburgh Review*, No. 97 (Spring 1997), 90
- Fox, C.J., 'Poetry and its Discontents', *P. N. Review*, Vol. 17 No. 4 (1991), 78-79
- Fowler, John, 'Prickly Poet Is a Straight Thinker', *Herald Scotland*, 'Weekend' Supplement, 27 May 1995, p. 7
- Gray, Alasdair, 'Under the Sphinx', *London Review of Books*, 11 March 1993, p. 10
- Grayling, A.C., 'Poet's desolate life on earth', *Financial Times*, 20 February 1993, p. 22

- Gunn, George, 'An Unvanquishable Number', *Chapman*, No. 61-62 (Autumn 1990) 184-185
- Herdman, John, 'A light on the night', *Chapman*, No. 74-75 (Autumn/Winter 1993), 195
- McCabe, Brian, 'The Changing of the Vanguard', *Scotsman*, 5 October 1996, p. 19
- McGrath, Tom, 'Tom Leonard: Man with Two Heads', *Akros*, 28 (1974), 10-17
- MacNeacail, Aonghas, 'Journeys on the edge of darkness,' *Scotsman*, 'Weekend' supplement, 20 February 1993, p. 7
- McGuire, Matt, 'Review of access to the silence', *Scottish Studies Review*, Vol. 6 Issue 1 (2005), p. 127-129
- McMillan, Joyce, 'Authentic Voice of Radical Renfrew', *Herald Scotland*, 'Weekend' supplement, 3 March 1990, p. 5
- Manson, Peter, 'A Glasgow "this"', *Poetry Review*, Vol. 94 Issue 4 (2004/2005), 70-72
- Morgan, Edwin, 'Pumping up the Volumes for Leonard', *Scotsman*, 11 March 1995, p. 15
- Murphy, Hayden, 'Soul's sad journey', *Herald Scotland*, 18 February 1993, p. 14
- Perloff, Marjorie, 'Dreams of Weeds', *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 April 2005, p. 26
- Price, Richard, 'Better Than Nay Poem', *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 January 2006, p. 24
- Relich, Mario, 'Reviews of Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson ("B.V."). The City of Dreadful Night', *Lines Review*, No. 131 (1994), 56-58
- Riach, Alan, 'Review of *Reports From the Present: selected work: 1982-94*', *Lines Review*, No. 133 (1995), 54-56
- Rosie, George, 'Alive and kicking', *Chapman*, 83 (1996), 94
- Taylor, Alan, 'The poet as biographer', *Scotland on Sunday*, 'Spectrum' supplement, 21 February 1993, p. 7

## Secondary Sources

- Aho, Kevin, *Existentialism: An introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014)
- Bain, Simon, 'Region Bans Top Book of Poetry', *Scotsman*, 16 March 1985, p. 4
- Bell, Eleanor, *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004)

- ‘Old Country, New Dreams: Scottish Poetry Since the 1970s’, in *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, Volume 3 Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)* ed. by Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007)
- Bradford, Richard, *The Look of It: A Theory of Visual Form in English Poetry* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1993)
- Broom, Sarah, *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)
- Brown, Ian, ‘Cultural Centrality and Dominance: The Creative Writers View — Conversations between Scottish Poets / Playwrights and Ian Brown’, *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*, Vol. 4 Issue 1 (2011), pp. 1-40. Originally published in *Interface: A New Interdisciplinary Journal for the Creative Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: Cultural Hegemony, Theoretic and Creative Perspectives*, Issue 3 (1984)
- Brown, Ian, and Alan Riach, *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009)
- Brown, Robert, ed. *Paisley Poets*, Vol. One (Paisley: J. & J. Cook, Printers and Publishers, 1889)
- Burgess, Moira, *Imagine a City: Glasgow in Fiction* (Glendaruel: Argyll Publishing, 1998)
- Burston, Daniel, ‘R.D. Laing: A Biographical Sketch’, in *R.D. Laing Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Salman Raschid (London: Free Association Books, 2005)
- Campbell, Ian, ‘Neither Scotland nor Scots’, *Books in Scotland* (1990), 7-10
- Caplan, David, *Questions of Possibility: Contemporary Poetry and Poetic Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Carruthers, Gerrard, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009)
- Colebrook, Claire, *Irony*, from *The New Critical Idiom series* (New York: Routledge, 2004)
- Collier, Andrew, *R.D. Laing: The Philosophy and Politics of Psychotherapy* (Chichester: The Harvester Press Ltd, 1977)
- Cooper, David, ‘Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. by Steven Crowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- *Existentialism: A Reconstruction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1990)

- Caws, Mary-Anne, 'Strong-Line Poetry: Ashberry's Dark Edging and the Lines of Self', in *The Line in Postmodern Poetry*, ed. by Robert Frank and Henry Sayre (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 51-59
- Craig, Cairns, 'Kelman's Glasgow Sentence', in *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. by Scott Hames (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) pp. 75-85
- Crawford, Robert, *Devolving English Literature*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000)
- *Identifying Poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth Century Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993)
- della Mirandola, Giovanni Pico, *On the Dignity of Man and Other Works*, trans. by Charles Glen Wallis, with an introduction by Paul J.W. Miller (Indianapolis and New York, 1965)
- Delville, Michel, *The American Prose Poem: Poetic Form and the Boundaries of Genre* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998)
- de Man, Paul, 'The rhetoric of temporality', in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by C.S. Singleton (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1969)
- Dewey, Anna Day, *Beyond Maximus: The Construction of Public Voice in Black Mountain Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007)
- Dobell, Bertram, *The Laureate of Pessimism: A Sketch of the Life and Character of James Thomson (B.V.)* (Port Washington, New York and London: Kennikat Press, 1910)
- Donaldson, William, ed., *The Language of the people: Scots prose from the Victorian revival* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989)
- ed., *Popular literature in Victorian Scotland: language, fiction and the press* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989)
- Dunnigan, Sarah, Douglas Gifford, and Alan MacGillivray, eds., *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002)
- Dunning, Colin 'Ian Hamilton Finlay: An Appreciation', *Northwords Now* (Summer 2006)
- Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms* ed. by Irena R. Makaryk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993)
- Feuerlicht, Ignace, *Alienation: From the Past to the Future* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978)

- Fielding, Penny, *Writing and orality: Nationality, Culture and Nineteenth-century Scottish Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
- Filipovic, Ljiljana, 'More than 50 years after: Laing, Sartre and the Other' in *R.D. Laing: 50 Years Since The Divided Self*, ed. by Theodor Itten and Courtenay Young (Ross-on-Wye: PCSS Books, 2012)
- Finlay, Alec, 'Letters to Ernest Jandl', *Chapman* (1994), 10-16
- Finlay, Ian Hamilton, 'Fishing from the Back of Rousay', *Lines Review*, Spring (1967), 38
- *Glasgow beasts, an a burd haw an inseks, an, aw, a fush*, 5th edn (London: Fulcrum Press, 1965)
- 'Homage to Malevich', circa 1965 (London: Tate Modern, 2003)
- Finlayson, William, 'Weaver's Lament', in *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War*, ed. by Tom Leonard (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), pp. 57-62
- Fisher, Mark 'Hark the rebel yell', *Herald Scotland*, 5 June 2004, 'Arts, Books & Cinema' supplement, p. 4
- Flynn, Thomas R., *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Gardiner, Michael, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory since 1960* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006)
- Gifford, Douglas, 'At Last – the Real Scottish Literary Renaissance?', *Books in Scotland* (1990), 1-18
- 'Killing the Dreams of Tradition and Modernity', *Books in Scotland* (1990), 10-17
- *The Dear Green Place? The Novel in the West of Scotland* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1985)
- Glazier, Loss Pequeño, *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002)
- Glen, Duncan, 'A New Harmony? Younger Scottish Poets Today', *Akros*, 9 (1975), 51-65
- Goring, Rosemary, 'The glare of Medea', *Herald Scotland*, 9 August 2008, p. 14
- Hagan, Anette I., *Urban Scots Dialect Writing* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2002)
- Hartman, Geoffrey, *Saving the Text: Literature / Derrida / Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981)

- Hayles, N. Kathryn, 'The Time of Digital Poetry: From Object to Event' in *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts and Theories*, ed. by Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006) pp. 181-209
- Hegel, G.W.F., *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (New York: Prometheus Books; abridged edition)
- Heller, Kevin Jon and Eleanor Kaufman, ed., *Deleuze & Guattari: new mappings in politics, philosophy, and culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)
- Hobsbaum, Philip, 'Speech Rather Than Lallans: West of Scotland Poetry', *Lines Review* (1990), 4-10
- 'The Glasgow Group: An Experience of Writing', *Edinburgh Review*, 80-1, (1988) 59-63
- Holden, Jonathan, 'The Free Verse Line', in *The Line in Postmodern Poetry* ed. by Robert Frank and Henry Sayre (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988)
- Horovitz, Michael, ed., *Children of Albion: Poetry of the 'Underground' in Britain* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969)
- Hortulanus, Roelof, Machielse, Anja and Meeuwesen Ludwein, *Social Isolation in Modern Society* (London: Routledge, 2006)
- Hubbard, Tom, ed., *The New Makars: The Mercat Anthology of Contemporary Poetry in Scots* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1991)
- Hutcheon, Linda, *Irony's Edge: the theory and politics of irony* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Itten, Theodor, 'From The Divided Self to The Voice of Experience' in *R.D. Laing: 50 Years Since The Divided Self*, ed. by Theodore Itten and Courtenay Young (Ross-on-Wye: PCSS Books, 2012) pp. 190-217
- Johnson, Frank, *Alienation: Concept, Term and Meanings* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973)
- Kaplan, Morton A., *Alienation and Identification* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishing 1977)
- Kelman, James, *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural & Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992)
- Kierkegaard, Søren, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. by David Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974)

- *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, trans. and sel. by Alexander Dru (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959)
- Kolbas, Dean, E. *Critical Theory and the Literary Canon* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001)
- Korzeniowska, Aniela, 'The Significance of Scots and Its Accents in Contemporary Scottish Literature, and Its Reflection in Translation', *Literature (Literatura)* Vol. 49, Issue 5 (2007), 93-102
- Laing, R.D., *The Divided Self* (London: Pelican Books, 1973)
- McClure, J. Derrick, *Language, Poetry and Nationhood: Scots as a Poetic Language from 1878 to the Present* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000)
- 'Studies in the Language and Literature of Lowland Scotland' in *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, pp. 129- 48)
- Macdougall, Carl, *Scots: The Language of the People* (Edinburgh: Black and White Publishing, 2006)
- McGrath, Tom, 'Tom Leonard: Man with Two Heads', *Akros*, Vol. 8. No. 28 (1974), 40- 49
- McGuire, Matt, *Contemporary Scottish Literature: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)
- McLaughlin, Martyn, 'Poet: Catholic Cult of Virginity Made Me Keep Rape a Secret Leonard Tells of Five Decades after Being Shunned', *Herald Scotland*, 21 December 2005, p. 4
- McLaughlin, Paul, *Radicalism: A Philosophical Study* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012)
- McLean, Jim, 'Literary Giants Create New Alliance: Kelman, Gray & Leonard Form a Dream Team of Creative Writing to Put Scotland on the International Map', *Herald Scotland*, 22 May 2001, p. 3
- 'New Professors Created Job Share Idea', *Herald Scotland*, 23 May 2001, p. 3
- MacLean, John Ross, 'Creative Writing' *Herald Scotland*, 28 May 2001, p. 3
- Macwhirter, Iain, 'That Bloody Woman', *New Statesman*, 26 February 2009  
 <<http://www.newstatesman.com/uk-politics/2009/02/scottish-scotland-thatcher>>  
 [accessed on 10 March 2012]

- Makaryk, Irena R., ed., *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1993)
- Mansfield, Susan, 'Deadlier Than the Female', *Scotsman*, 18 July 2009, p. 9
- 'Back-rubs and beheadings', *Scotland on Sunday*, 'The Review' supplement, 14 February 2010, p. 10.
- March, Christie L., *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh, Mclean, Warner, Banks, Galloway and Kennedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002)
- Maxwell, James, 'The Divine Origin of Poetry Asserted and Approved', in *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War*, ed. by Tom Leonard (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990)
- Milton, Colin, 'Dialects, Orality and the Poetry of Tom Leonard: In the Beginning Was the Sound' in *Alba Literana: A History of Scottish Literature*, ed. by Marco Fazzini (Venezia Mestie: Amos Edizioni, 2005), pp. 577-609
- 'Ma Language is Disgraceful: Tom Leonard's Glasgow Dialect Poems', in *Englishes Around the World*, Vol. I, ed. by Edgar W. Schneider, (Amsterdam: Benjamin, 1997), pp. 185-210
- Morgan, Edwin, 'Glasgow Speech in Recent Scottish Literature' in *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue*, ed. by J. Derrick McClure (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1993), pp. 195-218
- 'Scottish Poetry in the Nineteenth Century', in *The History of Scottish Literature: Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp. 337 - 51
- *Collected Translations*, (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1996)
- 'Into the constellation: Some thoughts on the origin and nature of concrete poetry', *Akros*, Vol. 6 No. 8 (March 1972), 3-18
- 'Mordechai Vanunu: a prisoner of conscience', <[www.vanunu.org](http://www.vanunu.org)> [accessed 15 August 2012]
- Motherwell, William, ed., *The Harp of Renfrewshire: a collection of songs and other poetical pieces* (Paisley: Oliver & Boyd, 1820)
- Morier, H., 'Ironie', *Dictionnaire de poetique et de rhetorique*, 2nd edn (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1981)



- Mulrine, Stephen 'The Coming of wee Malkies' in *The Akros Anthology of Scottish Poetry*, ed. by Duncan Glen, 1-89 (p.74)
- 'Glasgow No.7', *Akros*, 7 (1972), 45
- 'Tom Leonard's "The Good Thief"' *Akros*, 17 (1983 October), pp. 54-55
- O'Rourke, Donny, *Dream State: New Scottish Poets* (Edinburgh, Polygon, 1994)
- Nicholson, Colin, *Poem, Purpose and Place: Shaping Identity in Contemporary Scottish Verse* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992)
- Noland, Carrie, 'Digital Gestures', in *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts and Theories* ed. by Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006) pp. 217- 43
- Norman, Richard, *On Humanism*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Routledge, 2012)
- Oken, Donald, 'Alienation and Identity: Some Comments of Adolescence, the Counterculture, and Contemporary Adaptations' in *Alienation: Concept, Term and Meanings*, ed. Frank Johnson (New York: Seminar Press, 1973) pp. 83-110
- Olson, Charles, *The Maximus Poems*, ed. by George F. Butterick, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983)
- 'Projective Verse' in *Collected Prose of Charles Olson*, ed. by Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. pp. 239-249)
- Pack, Robert, *Affirming Limits: Essays on Mortality, Choice, and Poetic Form* (Amherst: The University of Manchester Press, 1988)
- Paolucci, Henry, *James Thomson's The City of Dreadful Night: A Study of the Cultural Resources of its Author and a Reappraisal of the Poem*, second edn (Wilmington: Griffin House Publications, 2000)
- Pandrich, Bruce and Hilda D. Spear, ed., *Sword and Pen: Poems of 1915 from Dundee and Tayside* (Aberdeen University Press: Aberdeen, 1989)
- Paulin, Tom, ed., *The Faber Book of Vernacular Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994)
- Perloff, Marjorie, 'Dreams of weeds', *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 April 2005, p. 26
- Pujol, Didac, *Across the Frontier: A Dialogic Approach to Literary Translation, Poetry, Language and Identity in Contemporary Irish and Scottish Literature* (Barcelona: PPU, 2000)

- Rapp, Carl, *William Carlos Williams and Romantic Idealism* (Hanover, New Hampshire and London: published for Brown University Press by University Press of New England, 1984)
- Reilly, Patrick, 'The Mirror of Literature: The Development of Catholicism in Scotland Since 1945', in *Scottish Affairs*, 8 (Summer 1994), pp. 1-20
- Riach, Alan, 'The Poetics of Devolution' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry*, ed. by Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 8-20
- Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
- Robertson, John, 'The Toom Meal Pock', in *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War*, ed. by Tom Leonard (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), pp. 5-7.
- Rotenstreich, Nathan, *Alienation: The Concept and its Reception* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1989)
- Russell, Bertrand, *Why I am not a Christian: and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Salt, Henry S., *The Life of James Thomson ("B.V.")*, (London: Watts & Co., 1916).
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. by Carol Macomber (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007)
- Sassi, Carla, *Why Scottish Literature Matters* (Edinburgh: The Saltire Society, 2005)
- Schaefer, William, David, *James Thomson (B.V.): Beyond 'The City': Perspectives in Criticism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965)
- Schat, Richard, *Alienation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1976)
- Scully, James, 'Line Break' in *The Line in Postmodern Poetry* ed. by Robert Frank and Henry Sayre (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1988), pp. 97-130
- Seeman, Melvin, 'On the Meaning of Alienation', in *American Sociological Review* Vol. 26, No. 4 (December 1959), pp. 783-791
- Selerie, Gavin, *Tom McGrath Riverside Interviews* (London: Binnacle Press, 1983)
- Smith, Aidan, 'The Words Carry Him to Heaven', *Scotland on Sunday*, 'Review' supplement, 23 April 2006, p. 7
- Smith, Donald, *Storytelling Scotland: A Nation in Narrative* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2001)

- Solomon, R.C., *From rationalism to existentialism: The existentialists and their nineteenth-century backgrounds* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972)
- Stern, David, *The Anthology in Jewish Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press 2004)
- Strachan, Zoe 'Glasgow's Forgotten Feminist', *Scottish Review of Books*, Vol. 9 Issue 4 (2014), 10.
- Stringfellow, Frank, *The Meaning of Irony: A Psychoanalytical Investigation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994)
- Thomson, James, *The City of Dreadful Night*, ed. by Roderick Watson, Canongate Classics (Edinburgh: Canongate Press Ltd, 1993)
- Troussé, Stephen, 'Camera Lucida', *Poetry News* (Winter 1997), p. 6
- Watson, Roderick, 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing' in *The Yearbook of English Studies 25: Non-standard Englishes and the New Media* (1995), pp. 141-156  
— *The Literature of Scotland: the middle ages to the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
- Wagner, Linda Welshimer, *The Poems of William Carlos Williams: A Critical Study* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1960)
- Wells, Robert, 'Reviews of That Ilk', *Akros*, 13 (1978), 110-17
- Whyte, Christopher, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004)
- ed., *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995)
- Williams, William Carlos, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968)
- Woods, Powell, 'The Poet as Engineer' in *Profile of William Carlos Williams*, ed. by Jerome Mazzaro (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1971) pp. 79-90
- Young, Courtenay, 'The "Divided Self"': A very personal account' in *R.D. Laing: 50 Years Since The Divided Self*, ed. by Theodor Itten and Courtenay Young (Ross-on-Wye: PCSS Books, 2012), pp.121-124















